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Chapter 1

Twilightkit blinked open her eyes. Lionkit, Hollykit, and Jaykit were playing with a freshly caught piece of fresh-kill. Ferncloud nudged the small calico kit with her nose.

"Go outside and play with those three," She murmured. Twilightkit stretched and padded out of the nursery. She took a small mouse from the fresh-kill pile and crouched down near a shady part of the clearing.

"We're lucky you're not like Lionkit, Hollykit, and Jaykit," Longtail's whiskers twitched in amusement. "We'd be overwhelmed with kits bouncing all over everyone!"

Twilightkit nodded absentmindedly. She finished up her mouse, and watched Squirrelflight scolding the three energetic kits, then headed back to the nursery.

"Hey, Twilightkit!" Hollykit called. "Want to play with us?"

Twilightkit paused, turned to look at her friend, then nodded. She followed her and caught up with the other two kits.

"Catch this, Hollykit!" Lionkit threw the prey into the air. Jaykit pounced, but Hollykit was faster. She grabbed the juicy mouse and tossed it to Twilightkit. The other kit stared at it as it thumped onto the ground in front of her, then swiped it towards Jaykit.

"Got it!" The blind tabby grunted. He was about to throw it back at Lionkit, but Squirrelflight grabbed the mouse in her jaws.

"You four shouldn't be playing with food," She scolded. "Prey's scarce, and we need to respect every morsel we eat."

Jaykit rolled his eyes. Hollykit muttered something to Lionkit, and he nodded his head vigorously.

"Go back to the nursery," The ginger warrior shooed them away

with a wave of her bushy tail.

"But I'm hungry!" Lionkit protested.

"Then eat that mouse!"

"Jaykit and Hollykit can eat it," He picked out a shrew from the pile, then pulled out a couple of mice for Daisy and Ferncloud. Twilightkit walked back to the nursery and curled up in her nest she shared with her brothers and sister. A crash from the thorn barrier made her lift her head drowsily. It was Thornclaw.

"Firestar! Firestar!" He yowled. "We found a dead fox!"

Chapter 2

Twilightkit poked her head out of the nursery to see what was going on.

"Where?" Firestar demanded.

"Near Sky Oak, killed by a fox-trap. It was a female, and she must have had cubs. There was a milk scent on her body." Thornclaw reported.

"Then we must kill them," Firestar announced gravely.

The leader ordered some warriors to search for the fox cubs, and the apprentices to scout near the camp to keep away the foxes.

"What about us?" Lionkit demanded.

"Yeah, we're almost six moons old!" Hollykit added. Twilightkit walked out of the nursery again.

"Almost isn't enough," Brambleclaw, their father, meowed. "But you can keep watch in camp, and keep Ferncloud and Daisy safe. They won't be protecting themselves with two tiny kits!" He added.

She had always been a calm, quiet kit with weird eyes, but Brambleclaw and Squirrelflight had loved her like any other kit. Though other cats did treat her like the other kits, many others teased her about her weird eyes, where one was green, the other blue.

But that didn't bother Twilightkit. She usually just shrugged it off and ignored them.

Twilightkit nodded, and the deputy turned back to Firestar with a satisfied expression. The patrols left, and she turned away from the entrance, since Brambleclaw was just trying to get the kits out of the way.

"We're in charge!" Lionkit puffed out his chest, looking proud.

"He's just getting us out of the way," Jaykit snapped, echoing Twilightkit's thoughts. She twitched an ear. The three kits were muttering suspiciously in the clearing, heads together.

Twilightkit walked up to them, brushing Hollykit's flank with her own fur. They jumped, surprised.

"Should we tell her?" Hollykit whispered loudly.

"We can trust her," Lionkit decided in an instant. "Twilightkit's our littermate."

"Okay," Jaykit agreed. Hollykit was looking like she just caught a huge rabbit.

"We're going to catch the fox cubs for Firestar," She blurted. "They can't be much bigger than us, and he'll have to make us apprentices. Do you want to come with us?"

Twilightkit shook her head. She had a bad feeling about this plan.

"You won't tell?" Jaykit narrowed his sightless blue eyes. She nodded, and the three relaxed.

"Let's go fox hunting!"

Chapter 3

It had been a while since Hollykit told Twilightkit that they were going to catch the fox kits. None had returned, and she couldn't help wondering when they'd come back. The camp was awfully quiet since they left.

"We didn't get to hear the wonderful sound of nothing since those kits of Brambleclaw's came," Mousefur grunted. Longtail purred in amusement.

"Right. Twilightkit, do you have any idea where they went?" He asked. Twilightkit shrugged. This was partly true, since she had no idea where the fox den was.

"Ha," Mousefur snorted. "You shouldn't've expected an answer from that kit. She never gives a proper answer. Disrespectful, in my opinion."

The calico kit shrugged again. Mousefur was always cranky, and frankly, Twilightkit didn't really care about what other cats called her.

"Well, could you get us something from the fresh-kill pile, Twilightkit? We really could use some prey!" The blind tom asked. She nodded, and soon came back with a plump squirrel in her jaws.

"Thanks," He bit into the soft flesh. Mousefur grumbled something under her breath, then dug into the squirrel.

Twilightkit dipped her head at the two elders, then padded out of the den. She walked around, looking for something to do, before finally deciding to go back to the nursery. She turned around to walk to the warm den, when a yowl made her pause.

Twilightkit looked up to see Jaykit stumbling off the tall cliff that made the high walls of the hollow.

And he fell straight on top of her.

Chapter 4

"Oof," Twilightkit gasped. Her legs buckled underneath her, and she fell in a heap of calico fluff.

"Twilightkit?" Ferncloud stuck her head out of the nursery entrance, and her green eyes widened at the sight of two kits, one on top of the other.

"Jaykit!" She yowled. The queen raced to the blind tom as Twilightkit wriggled out from underneath him. She collapsed next to him, gasping for air. Jaykit was light, but that didn't mean being under him while he toppled off a high cliff onto her didn't hurt. Besides, he was still slightly bigger than herself. She coughed, trying to get enough air in her lungs to breathe again.

"What happened?" Leafpool demanded, examining each kit. Jaykit was scarcely breathing, a scrap of gray tabby fur covered in scratches from the hard rocks he bumped into. The medicine cat nosed his flank, then carried him towards her den.

"It's lucky he fell on Twilightkit," Leafpool murmured. Ferncloud nodded.

"Lucky he's alive," She sighed. "Will they both be alright?"

"Twilightkit just needs a poppyseed and some thyme for the shock," The medicine cat mewed. "Jaykit...He'll need to stay in my den for a bit. I need to treat those scratches and bruises."

Ferncloud nodded briskly and curled her tail around Twilightkit. She licked the kit's long fur, which was dusty and tufty from having Jaykit fall on top of her. Twilightkit shivered, suddenly getting a full impact of what had just happened.

Leafpool gave her the small seed as well as some sharp-smelling thyme. Twilightkit obediently licked the herbs up.

She closed her green eye, looking at the herbs in the store with her other blue one. The scent of them made her relax, and she soon fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Chapter 5

Twilightkit woke up. She was in the nest she shared with Hollykit, Lionkit, and Jaykit, but Jaykit wasn't next to her.

"Twilightkit?" Daisy yawned. "Go back to sleep, it's hardly dawn."

Twilightkit nodded and nestled in comfortably next to Lionkit. Her side was cold because Jaykit wasn't there to shield her from the cold, but the side that pressed into Lionkit's long golden pelt was warm. She wriggled around for a bit, trying to get warm, then gave up and sat back up.

"Great StarClan, Twilightkit! You're wrigglier than a pile of worms this morning," Hollykit murmured, half asleep. Twilightkit licked the other kit's black pelt in apology, then walked out of the nursery. She went over to Leafpool's den.

"Twilightkit?" Leafpool was soaking some borage leaves. "You're awake already?"

She nodded, then tilted her head curiously at the leaves.

"I need to dry it later, and then it'll preserve for longer," The medicine cat mewed. "Do you know what these leaves are called?"

"Borage."

"Yes," Leafpool meowed, clearly pleased. Jaykit woke up, blinking his blind blue eyes.

"Jaykit! Do you need anything? Water?" She asked, paws twitching, ready to help.

"No," He groaned. "That cat already gave me some."

"Another cat? Do you mean Ferncloud?"

"No, she was a tortoiseshell."

Twilightkit blinked.

"Not you. She gave me some sweet water," Jaykit mewed quickly. "And I could see."

Twilightkit stopped listening as Jaykit and Leafpool began discussing the mystery cat. She focused on an ant on the ground, scuttling around on the sandy floor.

"It was Spottedleaf," Leafpool told the two kits. Twilightkit's head snapped up, ears pricked.

"Who?" Jaykit's eyes were wide with anticipation.

"Spottedleaf. She died when Firestar first came to ThunderClan." Leafpool explained. "Hmm. Well, if you really don't need anything, Jaykit, I need to treat your wounds. Twilightkit, do you want to help?"

Twilightkit nodded, and the brown tabby showed her how to chew the dock and lick it into the injured kit's wounds.

"You'd be a great medicine cat if you want to be one, Twilightkit," Leafpool meowed warmly as she headed out of the medicine cat's den. "You have talent."

Twilightkit twitched an ear to show that she heard, and she padded out, tail swishing happily at the comment.

Chapter 6

Twilightkit crouched in the undergrowth, prepared to pounce. A fat vole was perched on a rotting branch, nibbling on a small nut. She crept forward, unsheathing her claws, when a familiar scent hit her nose.

Marigold! Twilightkit remembered the tangy scent of the flowers in Leafpool's den. She forgot about the plump vole and crashed past the branch to reach the healing herbs. Suddenly, an unfamiliar, yet familiar scent wrathed around her, and Twilightkit spun around, confused.

"Hello, Twilighkit," An unfamiliar she-cat rasped. She had clumped gray fur with knowing yellow eyes and a broad, flat face. The kit felt a startling feeling inside, and she knew instantly knew that she could trust the strange cat.

Twilightkit tilted her head at the other she-cat.

"I see you are not a cat with many words." Twilightkit suddenly saw the stars in her pelt.

"Wait-" She called finally.

"I am Yellowfang," The StarClan cat was already turning away. "I will guide you, and this won't be the last time we meet."

Twilightkit frantically scrabbled up and tried to race after Yellowfang, who was now barely a shadow. But however much she ran, the calico kit couldn't catch up, and the dream was already fading away.

She woke up in the nursery, next to the stirring forms of Hollykit and Lionkit.

"Yellowfang!" Twilightkit gasped. Just then, Leafpool shoved her way through the entrance of the den.

"What?" She asked sharply. "Did you say something, Twilightkit?"

"She said a lot while some cats were trying to sleep," Lionkit muttered sleepily. "Something about this cat called Yellowfang."

"Twilightkit?" Leafpool's mew was sharp. "Let's go to my den. I want to check on Jaykit, and I thought you might want to help."

"Ooh!" Hollykit jumped up in excitement, all tiredness gone. "Can I go?"

"Maybe next time, Hollykit." The medicine cat was already turning away. Twilightkit turned to lick her sister on the head, then padded out after her.

Chapter 7

"Twilightkit, do you realize that you've just been visited by a StarClan cat?" Leafpool asked as soon as they squeezed into the medicine den. Twilightkit nodded.

"I will see her again," She mewed. "My path is...different. But fate is fate."

"You've always been the wise one of the litter," Leafpool praised. "And I have a request. An offer. Would you like to be my apprentice?"

Twilightkit blinked in surprise.

"If StarClan had spoken to you, Twilightkit, then they have given me a sign." The medicine cat turned to her herb store, and rummaged around.

The calico kit twitched an ear, delighted by the offer. When Leafpool turned around with a mouthful of dock, Twilightkit nodded to show that she agreed.

"Great!" Leafpool purred, setting the dock down besides her. "I'll tell Firestar, but for now, you can help me chew some of this dock up for Jaykit. Tomorrow, he'll be able to go back to the nursery."

Twilightkit nodded again, then picked up the leaves and padded over to the pile of gray tabby fur. She chewed the dock into a pulp, spat it out onto her paw, then smeared it into his healing wounds. Just then, Hollykit walked in.

"Oh, hello, Hollykit." Leafpool blinked in surprise. "What brings you here in my den?"

"Something important," The black kit glanced at Twilightkit's paws, green with dock juice. "I need to talk to you. Alone."

"Okay," Leafpool agreed. "Twilightkit, go back to the nursery with

Jaykit. Oh, and thanks for helping around!"

Twilightkit shrugged, then nudged her brother awake.

"What?" He grumbled. "I was dreaming!"

"Hollykit needs to talk with me," Leafpool explained. "You can go back to the nursery and rest, okay?"

"Sure," Jaykit pushed through the entrance. "Thanks, Leafpool."

Twilightkit followed, pricking her ears to hear what Hollykit was talking about.

"...be your apprentice," Her sister's voice mewed. "I'd like to help the clan in a different way, with peace instead of violence."

Hollow with dread, Twilightkit stumbled behind Jaykit, and curled up in their nest. Lionkit was at the fresh-kill pile, choosing some prey for his stomach, but Twilightkit was too tired and shocked to eat. Pushing her nose in between her paws, she wondered if Hollykit would be able to follow her dream.

Chapter 8

It had been a few sunrises since Leafpool had asked Twilightkit to be her apprentice. Twilightkit tried to sit still as Squirrelflight licked her briskly, her eyes shining with pride.

"I'm so excited!" Hollykit squealed. Lionkit purred loudly, and nudged Twilightkit with his nose.

"Aren't you excited?" He asked. "It's our apprentice ceremony!"

She nodded, ducking out of the way as Squirrelflight bent down to clean her up again. Jaykit, however, was looking as grumpy as ever.

"All cats old enough to catch prey, gather around Highrocks for a Clan meeting!" Firestar yowled, his green gaze warm and kind.

"Today we shall have my favorite ceremony," He looked down at Twilightkit, Jaykit, Hollykit, and Lionkit. "Lionkit, come forward."

The gold-furred kit stepped towards Firestar, trembling with apprehension.

"Lionkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Lionpaw. Your mentor will be Ashfur. I hope he will pass down all he knows onto you." Firestar continued.

"Ashfur, you are ready to take on an apprentice. You have received excellent training from Dustpelt, and you have shown yourself to be loyal and has shown courage in battle. You will be the mentor of Lionpaw, and I expect you to pass on all you know to him.

"Hollykit, step forward." Twilightkit leaned in, ears pricked. "You have reached the age of six moons. From now on, you will be known Hollypaw. Your mentor will be Brackenfur."

Hollypaw's eyes were wide with dismay, but a second later, she straightened up and touched noses with the pleased warrior.

Twilightkit waited patiently as Jaypaw was assigned to Brightheart.

"Twilightkit, step forward." The calico kit walked calmly towards Firestar.

"You have chosen a path different from many. Leafpool, is it your wish to take on an apprentice?"

"It is."

"Then Twilightkit, from now on, you will be known as Twilightpaw. Leafpool, I hope you pass on all your wisdom and knowledge onto this apprentice."

Leafpool leaned forward to touch noses with Twilightpaw.

"I'll teach you all I know," She murmured. Twilightpaw stared into the medicine cat's amber eyes, and was surprised to see sorrow in her gaze.

Chapter 9

Twilightpaw sniffed at the base of the old, crumbling Twoleg den.

"This is catmint," Leafpool explained, nosing a clump of small green shoots, barely out of the earth. "It's used for Greencough and Whitecough, and is rare to come by. Catmint only grows near Twolegs, or their dens."

Twilightpaw's head was whirling from all the different herbs and usages, but she tried her best to cram all the knowledge inside.

"So, Twilightpaw," Leafpool prompted. "What herb do you use if a cat steps on a thorn, or a sharp rock?"

The apprentice thought for a second, trying to find the right information.

"Dock?" She guessed. "Marigold?"

"Yes," Her mentor purred. "What do they do to help?"

"Prevents infection." Twilightpaw meowed.

"Very good," Leafpool praised. "Now, we'll go back to camp, and I'll show you how to treat infected wounds."

Twilightpaw sniffed at the fresh-kill pile. A juicy sparrow was on the top, plump and young. She chose a small vole for herself, then dragged the sparrow towards the elder's den.

"Thank you, Twilightpaw," Longtail nosed the sparrow. "This looks delicious. Mousefur, look at what Twilightpaw got you."

"Hmph." The small brown she-cat just sniffed.

"Hey, Twilightpaw!" Lionpaw scrambled to a halt besides the calico apprentice. "Jaypaw and Hollypaw are waiting for you!"

She picked up her vole and padded over to the edge of the clearing, where her littermates were.

"What was it like to be a medicine cat apprentice?" Hollypaw asked, curious. Twilightpaw winced, remembering how much the black apprentice had wanted to be in her place.

She chose to just shrug casually, trying not to hurt her feelings.

"I bet it was more exciting than my day," Jaypaw huffed. "All I did was take care of the elders."

Lionpaw chewed on his mouse slowly, amber eyes sympathetic.

"That sounds bad," He commented. "But I had so much fun! We explored almost the whole territory, and I caught a mouse on my first try!"

"Great!" Hollypaw bit into her shrew. "I missed my vole, though. Wow, the forest was so big!"

"Look," Jaypaw interrupted, shoving the mouse he had been sharing with Lionpaw away. "I'm tired. I'm going to get some sleep."

"Maybe tomorrow you'll get some better errands," Hollypaw chided.

"Like what? Moss gathering?" He snorted, then padded away to the apprentice's den.

Twilightpaw watched him go, then finished her vole in a few rapid bites. She stood up, nodded farewell to her littermates, and headed to the medicine den, where her new den was waiting for her.

Chapter 10

Twilightpaw woke up at dawn, curled up in a tight ball in her moss nest. She had missed the warmth of Lionpaw and Jaypaw's fur as she slept, but it hadn't been very cold that night.

"Twilightpaw?" Leafpool nosed her way through the den. "I need you to gather some herbs. Try going to the WindClan border; there are some herbs that grow better near the moor. I think a few clumps of thyme grew nearby."

Twilightpaw nodded, remembering what the long, skinny leaves looked like, and the tangy scent of the herb.

Used to calm cats, She remembered. Nodding a farewell, Twilightpaw padded out of the den and through the forest, weaving through the trees. She soon caught the scent of WindClan, and Twilightpaw wrinkled her nose at the unfamiliar smell.

Soon, she spotted a small clump of thyme near the border, and the calico apprentice nipped the feathery stalks until she had a bundle of the herb besides her.

Suddenly, a yowl of surprise made her stiffen. It was a familiar voice, and it was faint, as if it had come from far away.

Oh, no, Twilightpaw thought in dismay. *Jaypaw's in trouble!*

Picking up the bundle of thyme, she straightened up and ran as fast as she could towards the desperate cries from her brother.

"A blind kit on our territory?" Twilightpaw heard as she drew nearer. She squinted, and managed to see a wet scrap of gray tabby fur, surrounded by four cats, their wind-blown pelts short and thin. The five of them were besides a river, and Twilightpaw could guess what had happened.

Twilightpaw started racing towards the five, and was barely aware of crossing the WindClan border. She skidded to a halt besides Jaypaw, still clutching onto the clump of thyme.

"Another kit?" A lean black apprentice, hardly older than Twilightpaw growled. He sniffed at her direction. "ThunderClan again! Can't Firestar control his apprentices?"

"Now, now, Breezepaw," A gray tabby tom lifted his tail high in the air. "Don't."

Twilightpaw guessed that he was Breezepaw's mentor. She ignored the rude apprentice and nudged a few stalks of thyme under Jaypaw's nose. He sniffed at them warily, scented his own sister, then licked them up.

"Thanks, Twilightpaw." He muttered. A white she-cat laid a paw on the wiry gray warrior's shoulder.

"Tornear, we should take these apprentices back to their territory." She urged. "Then we can report to Onestar."

A light brown tabby apprentice padded closer to Twilightpaw and Jaypaw.

"Hi, I'm Heatherpaw!" She introduced. "This is Breezepaw, and he thinks he can boss me around just because Crowfeather's my mentor. Crowfeather's his father," Heatherpaw added. "Breezepaw's the newest apprentice in the clan, but he acts as though he's already a warrior!"

Twilightpaw licked her brother's fur dry as she listened to Breezepaw and Heatherpaw bickering, and wondered how different her life could've been if she was a warrior apprentice.

Chapter 11

Whitetail, the white she-cat, led the way through the forest as Tornear and Heatherpaw followed, with Jaypaw trudging a few steps back, and Twilightpaw brushed her nose into his pelt, trying to make him feel better.

"Watch it!" He growled, as Breezepaw shoved them both from behind. Twilightpaw stumbled a bit, then regained her footing.

"How desperate could ThunderClan get, making blind cats warrior apprentices and weird-eyed kits a medicine cat?" He jeered. "Your medicine cat name should be Weird-eyes, or Freakeye!"

Jaypaw hissed, his fur standing on end.

"Don't you dare threaten my sister!" The blind apprentice growled.

"Or what?" Breezepaw smirked. "You'll hiss at me? Wow, I'm so frightened!"

Jaypaw let out a yowl of anger, and launched at the black apprentice. He raked his claws at Breezepaw's muzzle. Breezepaw scrabbled back, then lunged, clawing at Jaypaw's ears.

Twilightpaw fluffed out her fur and stepped between the two fighting toms. Breezepaw thrust his nose into her side and flung her away.

"*What* are you *doing*?" Whitetail screeched, rushing towards them. Horror light up her amber gaze. "Stop fighting this *instant!*"

Twilightpaw stood up, and padded over to Jaypaw. She put her tail gently on his back, and he stopped, growling. Tornear dragged Breezepaw roughly away by the scruff. Heatherpaw watched with a worried frown.

"You were lucky," Breezepaw breathed threateningly. "If Whitetail and Tornear hadn't stopped us, I'd have clawed you into pieces."

Without waiting for a reply, he whirled around and walked towards ThunderClan camp.

"You must feel so safe, Odd-eye," He continued without looking back. "Having a blind brother protect you."

With a cruel, *mrrow* of laughter, he pranced off behind Heatherpaw. Jaypaw clawed at the soft grass with unsheathed claws, but Twilightpaw stopped him, brushing his pelt with her own calico fur.

It's not worth it, Twilightpaw thought to herself. *Not worth it.*

Chapter 12

Firestar had been furious at Jaypaw. He'd thanked the WindClan patrol, then announced that the blind apprentice wouldn't be able to leave the camp for a moon.

Which meant that he would miss the Gathering.

Twilightpaw watched as Hollypaw and Lionpaw reassured Jaypaw that they'd tell him all about the Gathering.

"We'll share all the gossip!" Hollypaw called.

"It wouldn't be as fun without you," Lionpaw swished his tail, sounding sympathetic.

"Don't bother," Jaypaw grumped. "Isn't it obvious that Firestar's keeping me in the camp on purpose?"

"Why?" Lionpaw sounded confused. "You're a ThunderClan apprentice, and that's an honorable title!"

"But it wouldn't look good for ThunderClan, wouldn't it?" Jaypaw snorted. "We have a blind apprentice, don't we?"

"But you're as good as any other apprentice!" Hollypaw insisted. "You can hear and smell prey and other things better than other cats!"

Firestar let out a yowl, and all the cats going to the Gathering shuffled into a small group. Twilightpaw gave Jaypaw a quick lick between his ears, and hurried to catch up to Leafpool.

"Race you there!" Hollypaw hared away, and Lionpaw let out a teasing growl.

"You'll never win!" He raced after his sister. Twilightpaw looked at her littermates as Squirrelflight hurried after them.

"How would it look like if two ThunderClan apprentices are acting like kits?" She scolded.

They finally arrived at the broken tree that led to the island. The tree acted like a bridge, and the tip reached over the thrashing black water. Twilightpaw placed one delicate paw cautiously on the rough bark, and leaped up. The tree wobbled for a moment, then went still.

"Well?" Berrypaw's impatient mew sounded from behind her, and a hard shove from the cream-colored apprentice made the calico apprentice stumble, almost making her tumble into the swirling river. Twilightpaw walked cautiously, putting one paw in front of the other.

"If you walked any slower, you'd be slower than a snail!" Berrypaw snorted, trying to push ahead.

"Don't rush!" Brambleclaw warned, shooting Twilightpaw a worried look as she almost slipped. A sudden wail made her look in front again, and saw Berrypaw stumbling into the deep, cold water, it's waves lapping hungrily at the tree-bridge.

Chapter 13

Twilightpaw raced forward and grabbed Berrypaw by the scruff, heaving him up.

Great StarClan, he's heavy! She thought. Twilightpaw ignored the pain as she accidentally snagged it on a stray branch, ripping it out. She finally managed to pull him up, with Brackenfur's help, and the cream apprentice gasped in fright.

"Well?" Brambleclaw nudged Berrypaw up on his paws. "Aren't you going to thank Twilightpaw and Brackenfur?"

"Thanks," Berrypaw muttered, then scrambled down the tree, the stump of his tail twitching self-consciously. Twilightpaw followed, and when she was safely on the soft grass, she licked her paw clean, tasting the tangy blood.

"Are you alright?" Lionpaw asked, concern flashing in his warm amber eyes. Twilightpaw nodded, then padded through bushes full of sharp thorns, then saw a clearing full of cats from all clans.

"Woah," Hollypaw breathed, squeezing in after her. A huge tree sprouted from the ground, its huge twisting branches looming over the gather cats. Twilightpaw blinked in surprise, then turned to look at Leafpool, who had called out her name.

"Twilightpaw! Come over here!" The medicine cat called. Twilightpaw dipped her head at her, then gave her littermates a quick lick between the ears, then walked over to where Leafpool sat next to a few other cats.

"Hi!" Willowpaw meowed cheerfully. "I heard that you're a medicine cat apprentice now! Come sit next to me."

The calico apprentice nodded, then sat next to her friend. A beautiful golden tabby she-cat with darker spots flecking her flank greeted her. It was Mothwing.

"Hello," Mothwing's cool voice filled Twilightpaw's head. "We're glad you've chosen to be a medicine cat."

"Twilightpaw, this is Littlecloud," Leafpool introduced. "He's the ShadowClan medicine cat." -A small brown tabby dipped his head- "And this is Barkface and his apprentice Kestrelpaw."

A dark brown tom sat next to Leafpool, gray flecking his muzzle. Kestrelpaw, his apprentice, was looking nervously around, then turned quickly towards her.

"Hi," He mewed. Kestrelpaw's mottled fur was dappled with gray streaks that looked like soft feathers. A yowl from the Great Oak signaled that the Gathering was starting.

"Hunting has been well and there has been plenty of prey for WindClan," Onestar began. "We have one new apprentice: Breezepaw."

The black apprentice straightened up and puffed out his chest, amber eyes glowing as the gathering cats cheered his name.

"ShadowClan also has a new apprentice. Ivypaw." Blackstar announced. A wiry brown she-cat narrowed her eyes, not showing any emotions on her face. "We have had plentiful hunting thanks to our new territory."

Murmurs of surprise rippled through the clearing like a disturbed pond.

"We thank Firestar for giving us such a prey-rich filled territory." He continued.

Chapter 14

"I am pleased to know that you are getting so much out of a piece of land prey-poor in ThunderClan standards," Firestar stared levelly into Blackstar's amber eyes. Yowls of approval sounded from the ThunderClan cats.

Then he turned his green gaze towards the gathered cats.

"ThunderClan is fortunate to have more than one new apprentice," Firestar announced. "Jaypaw couldn't come tonight, but Hollypaw is here, as well as Lionpaw. And Twilightpaw."

Hollypaw's eyes gleamed from the shadows like bright stars, and Lionpaw puffed out his chest proudly. Twilightpaw curled her black-tipped tail neatly around her body, her calm gaze rested on Firestar.

"We are lucky that prey still runs plentifully in the forest, and the frost is melting away." He continued.

Suddenly, an unfamiliar scent washed over Twilightpaw, and she lifted her muzzle to smell it. The bracken fronds crackled, and she walked cautiously around the stiffened outlines of wary cats, trying to get a better view of what was going on. Firestar stopped talking as two shapes emerged into the clearing.

"Intruders!" The word spread like wildfire, and soon, the WindClan cats, who were closest to the strange cats, unsheathed their claws and the ShadowClan cats hissed threateningly. Firestar sniffed the air, then tensed. He tasted the air again, and his orange tail fell stiff and still in shock.

"Stop!" Firestar yowled, and everyone fell silent as he leaped down from the Great Oak. He pushed his way towards the two intruders. The ThunderClan leader's eyes went wide in disbelief as he got a clearer view of the cats.

"Graystripe?" Firestar choked out.

Chapter 15

Twilightpaw blinked in surprise. She'd heard about the legendary ThunderClan warrior in nursery tales, but she had never expected to see him in real life.

I thought he was dead, she thought. Graystripe was a gray tabby with a darker line on his back, dirty, matted fur, and Twilightpaw could see his ribs poking sharply out of his flank.

"You're alive!" Firestar cried. Graystripe looked over at his old friend.

"Graystripe's back!" One cat yowled.

"Graystripe!"

"He must've escaped the Twolegs!"

"What about Brambleclaw?"

Twilightpaw frowned slightly. What about Brambleclaw? When Graystripe had been kidnapped by the Twolegs, he'd been deputy. Firestar had replaced him with Brambleclaw, claiming he was dead.

"You didn't wait for me," Graystripe rasped.

"I couldn't. We had to leave." Firestar explained wretchedly. "If it had been only my life in danger, I'd have waited for you."

Berrypaw, Hazelpaw, Spiderleg, and Ashfur crowded around the gray tabby warrior, poking and sniffing his fur. He flinched away, looking startled.

"Give him some space," Leafpool cleared a path as she swished her tail. "He needs rest."

"But he's a legend!" Berrypaw complained. Twilightpaw hurried

after her mentor as she inspected Graystripe's flank for injuries. Squirrelflight eyed his companion.

"Who's this?" She asked.

"This is Millie," Graystripe replied. "I met her in the Twolegplace."

"She's a kittypet!" Spiderleg exclaimed.

"How did a kittypet make the journey?" Squirrelflight's eyes shone suspiciously.

"I wouldn't have made it without her," He defended Millie. He explained how he and Millie had first went to the forest, and saw Ravenpaw.

"Ravenpaw!" Firestar's eyes shone bright like moons. "How is he?"

"He's well; just worried about you." Graystripe answered.

As the two finished up their story, Twilightpaw turned around as she heard a snort of disgust. It was Blackstar. The huge white leader's amber eyes were fixed on Millie. She looked at him straight in the eyes, tail trembling, though the silver tabby didn't let go of his glare. Blackstar looked away, and Twilightpaw breathed a single sigh of relief.

"Let's not forget the truce." Graystripe warned the ShadowClan leader.

"The truce is for warriors," He snarled.

"The *Gathering* is for warriors!" Onestar added.

"Is ThunderClan welcoming another kittypet into their Clan?" One cat challenged.

"I have trained Millie to be a warrior!" Graystripe bristled. "A kittypet would have never survived the journey."

He broke off with a cough, rattling his whole body. Twilightpaw gazed at him with concern. The warrior needed rest, and she could

see that Millie was limping.

Firestar saw this, too, and pressed into Graystripe's body. "We'll go back to camp."

He looked at the other leaders. "Did you have any news to share?"

"Not us," Leopardstar shook her head.

"WindClan is satisfied." Onestar agreed. Blackstar only grunted.

"Then we'll go back." Firestar decided. Twilightpaw walked after her Clan as they all crossed the bridge again, wondering whether Millie would ever fit in to the Clans.

Chapter 16

As soon as the patrol came back to camp, Cinderpaw rushed over to them.

"Who's this?" She asked, curious. The gray apprentice sniffed at Graystripe's pelt.

"He was ThunderClan's deputy before you were born," Firestar explained.

"Graystripe?" She guessed. Twilightpaw watched as Cinderpaw ran off to the entrance of the warrior's den.

"Cloudtail!" She called, tail fluffed out in excitement. "Graystripe's back!"

Cloudtail, her mentor, stumbled blearily out of the den, shaking out his ruffled white fur.

"Graystripe?" His blue eyes went wide with surprise.

"What's all this racket?" Mousefur grumbled, padding out of her den with Longtail right behind her.

"I smell Graystripe," He sniffed the air, tail swishing in delight.

"Graystripe?" The wiry brown elder snorted. "You must be dreaming."

"He's not." Firestar purred. The entrance of the apprentice den shook as Jaypaw walked out into the clearing.

"What's happening?" He asked, blind blue eyes flashing with annoyance.

"Graystripe's back!" Twilightpaw turned around, startled, as Hollypaw answered.

"Who's with him?" Jaypaw parted his jaws in a wide yawn.

"Millie. She came with him," Lionpaw replied.

"Well, tell Leafpool she has an infected wound," Jaypaw wrinkled his nose. "I can smell it from here."

Twilightpaw dipped her head, then padded back to where Graystripe and Millie were. Jaypaw was right; Millie did have an infected wound.

Leafpool sniffed the gray tabby's paw. "It looks like you've got a thorn in your pad. It's infected. My apprentice will pull it out for you."

Twilightpaw inwardly winced as she saw the wound, oozing blood and pus. She licked Millie's paw, getting a grip of the thorn, then tugged it out.

"Ow!" The she-cat winced.

"Get some marigold, Twilightpaw." Leafpool ordered. The calico apprentice nodded, then ran to the medicine den. She scented the leaves, then grabbed a few leaves. Twilightpaw returned to her mentor.

"Thank you," Leafpool's warm amber eyes shone with pride and something else, then she turned to chew the marigold leaves up into a pulp, then licked it into Millie's now clean pad. Twilightpaw let out a yawn, suddenly feeling tired after the excitement.

"You must be tired," Leafpool noticed. "Go get some sleep, and we'll treat Graystripe and Millie in the morning."

"Cinderpelt would have been proud of both of you," Graystripe added.

"Brackenfur and Dustpelt made a den for you," Leafpool told him and his new mate. "I'll fetch you some moss for your nest."

"Thank you." Millie blinked. Twilightpaw looked questioningly at her mentor but she shook her head.

"I'll do it," Leafpool murmured. "You need some sleep."

Twilightpaw nodded, dipped her head at the two new cats, then headed back to the medicine den.

As she was squeezing through the entrance, Twilightpaw heard Graystripe meow, "She's the quietest apprentice I've ever seen in my entire lifetime. And I've seen a lot."

Chapter 17

Twilightpaw woke up in her nest. Leafpool wasn't in her moss nest, but nosing through their herb store.

"Oh, you're awake," She turned her head to look at the yawning calico apprentice. "I need you to gather some marigold. We're running low, and when Graystripe and Millie wake up, we'll need some to treat them."

Twilightpaw nodded, then padded out to the clearing. Brightheart and Cloudtail were sharing prey by the fresh-kill pile, and their daughter, Whitewing, was sharing tongues with Birchfall.

"Hi, Twilightpaw," Brackenfur greeted as she padded through the thorn barrier. The golden brown warrior was guarding the camp. "Where are you going?"

Twilightpaw dipped her head, then replied simply, "Out."

Brackenfur's whiskers twitched in amusement as she walked past him, heading straight through the familiar oak trees.

"Brilliant!" Leafpool praised as Twilightpaw slipped through the medicine den entrance with her mouth full of marigold leaves. "Come on, we need to treat Graystripe and Millie's wounds."

Twilightpaw padded after her mentor towards the temporary den for the mates.

"Who's here?" Millie murmured, opening one blue eye.

"It's Leafpool and Twilightpaw," Graystripe told her.

Twilightpaw sniffed his flanks for any scratches, then found a bad wound on his underbelly. She licked it clean, then chewed up the fresh marigold leaves, smearing the poultice on the scratch with a gentle orange paw. Graystripe winced a bit as the healing juice

soaked through his scratches.

"Well, we're all done," Leafpool announced just as Twilightpaw finished smearing an oak leaf and coltsfoot poultice on a particularly long gash into his thick gray fur.

"Thanks." Graystripe grunted.

"Thank you," Millie purred. Twilightpaw licked the remaining pulp off of her font paws, then padded out of their den after her mentor.

"Twilightpaw," Leafpool began. "We're going to do something different today."

The apprentice tipped her head, curious.

Learn how to treat bellyaches? She guessed in her mind. *How to save a drowning cat? Interpret signs from StarClan?* That would be interesting.

Or...

"We're going to do battle-training."

Chapter 18

"Cinderpaw, you need to wait, *then* roll," Cloudtail's exasperated mew echoed through the training hollow. "Or you'll just bash into a tree or, even worse, an enemy. That wouldn't be very good, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, Cloudtail," Cinderpaw was scrambling clumsily back onto her paws when Leafpool and Twilightpaw entered the large clearing, the ground hard and littered with leaves.

"Oh, hi, Twilightpaw!" The dark gray apprentice lightened up. "What are you doing here?"

"We're going to do battle training." Leafpool answered as Twilightpaw nodded her greeting.

"Cloudtail, can we train together?" Cinderpaw begged.

"Maybe not now," Leafpool purred. "Come on, Twilightpaw. We'll learn the basics first."

She found a place in the large clearing where the ground was smooth, then meowed, "Run past me, and try to get to that tree without me catching you."

Twilightpaw nodded, then studied the distance between her and the tree. Leafpool was positioned a few fow-lengths in front of her, and her light brown body was tensed in anticipation. A few long strides would take Twilightpaw to the tree, and she could swerve past Leafpool when she tried lunging at her.

The calico apprentice raced towards her mentor, her long legs eating up the distance easily. She dug her claws in the ground as Leafpool suddenly grabbed at her, and Twilightpaw stumbled back. She fell on her back as the medicine cat pushed a paw on her chest, stopping her from moving.

"Well, you were fast," Leafpool noted. Twilightpaw stood back up and shook out her dust-filled pelt, slightly frustrated. It'd felt so natural running the few pawsteps, almost as if she'd been flying. As free and elegant as a bird.

Or a WindClan cat.

"Okay, Twilightpaw, the first thing you'll learn is to anticipate your opponent's move," Leafpool's warm eyes glowed. "If you look carefully enough, you'll notice that I dug my claws in the ground firmly, but not too firmly. That way, I'll be able to leap at anyone running past."

Twilightpaw spent the entire afternoon training, learning how to rake her claws over a cat's ears, deliver a blow with a front paw, and many other basic techniques.

Chapter 19

"I heard you went battle training with Leafpool today," Hollypaw took a bite of a starling. Twilightpaw nodded, chewing slowly on a piece of thrush she was sharing with Lionpaw. Jaypaw was looking grumpy, like usual, but there was something behind the normal snappy personality.

"I got to go on a hunting patrol," Lionpaw boasted. "I caught this crow, and it was huge!"

"Good for you," Jaypaw grumbled. He had barely touched his vole, and taking minuscule bites of the flesh. Twilightpaw was surprised that the blind apprentice hadn't said a sharp retort.

"I went on a border patrol to the ShadowClan border," Hollypaw was looking thoughtfully at her share of fresh-kill. "There were a few scents on our side of the border. I wonder whether Blackstar knows that his warriors are trespassing on our territory?"

"Probably," Lionpaw growled, lashing his tail. Twilightpaw listened while her littermates talked about their day. She wondered why Jaypaw was so quiet. Did he know something? Or do something? Maybe cross the border again? Did he plan to escape the camp? Perhaps leave the lake?

Twilightpaw was shaken out of her thoughts by Lionpaw's unexpected question.

"-think?" He was looking expectantly at her. Twilightpaw twitched her ear guiltily, then shrugged.

"He asked whether you think ShadowClan would invade," Jaypaw cut in. Twilightpaw gave him a grateful glance, then shrugged again.

"Hmm." Hollypaw gazed at the entrance of the thorn barrier, as if she expected something to crash through any time soon.

Twilightpaw pushed the rest of the thrush towards Lionpaw, full, then headed back to the medicine den.

Leafpool was dipping a wad of moss in the small pool besides their nests.

"Twilightpaw?" Leafpool looked up at her, then set the dripping moss down on the ground. "Could you take this to Ferncloud, please? I need to see what herbs we need to gather tomorrow. And then you can see the elders if they need anything."

Twilightpaw nodded, picked up the moss, and headed out the den again. She slipped easily through the entrance of the nursery, and remembered the days when she'd played moss ball with her littermates.

Though it wasn't often, Twilightpaw had enjoyed the days when she had no responsibilities, and was as free as a dove flying over the branches of towering trees.

Chapter 20

"Twilightpaw!" Leafpool poked her head out of the entrance of the medicine den. Twilightpaw looked up from dragging a stick with a wad of moss soaked in mouse bile. She'd been heading to the elder's den, about to search for Longtail and Mousefur's ticks.

"Can you join the patrol that goes to the ShadowClan border?" Her mentor asked. "I need you to find some tansy and horsetail, and it grows well near ShadowClan territory."

Twilightpaw hesitated, looking down at the stick she'd set down, then nodded.

"I meant later, when they leave," Leafpool added quickly. Twilightpaw nodded again, then picked the stick back up, wrinkling her nose at the smell. She heaved her way through the entrance of the elder's den.

"Oh, you're here," Longtail shuffled around uncomfortably in his nest. "I've got a huge tick on my tail that I can't reach."

Twilightpaw pressed the stinking moss at the tip of the blind elder's tail. A tick big enough to make anyone uncomfortable fell to the ground. As she was searching for ticks in silence, Jaypaw pushed through entrance.

"Leafpool says you need to go on the patrol," He called. Twilightpaw glanced back at Mousefur and Longtail.

"We'll be fine," Longtail flicked his striped tail.

"Get us some fresh-kill when you get back," Mousefur suggested. "I'd like a juicy sparrow!"

Twilightpaw nodded, then headed out the den. She raced after the leaving patrol, surprised when Jaypaw followed.

"I'm coming, alright?" He hissed. Twilightpaw pushed her nose into

his fur, then scanned the forest while walking after the patrol. Lionpaw and Berrypaw were there, too, along with their mentors, Ashfur and Brambleclaw.

Birchfall was at the back, with Jaypaw and Twilightpaw on his tail. Twilightpaw stopped as she scented the familiar smell of tansy. She sniffed at the clump of herbs, then nipped the stalks of the delicate leaves.

"You found some?" Dustpelt glanced back. "Do you need to go back to camp?"

Twilightpaw shook her head, remembering the horsetail Leafpool asked for. She gripped the tansy stems firmly in her mouth, barely able to scent anything over the grassy taste of the herb. When they arrived at the border, Jaypaw let out a warning yowl.

"ShadowClan patrol ahead!" He growled as he lashed his tail. Just then, the sound of pawsteps alerted Twilightpaw, and ShadowClan warriors barged through the undergrowth.

Chapter 21

"How embarrassing," Russetfur, the ShadowClan deputy sneered. "A blind kit notices an enemy patrol before the Clan deputy."

"Russetfur," Brambleclaw growled. "What are you doing here?"

As Twilightpaw analyzed the cats on the ShadowClan patrol, she was surprised to see that the enemy warriors surrounded them at all sides.

So it's the whole of ShadowClan, The apprentice guessed. Except the elders and queens.

She didn't see Blackstar anywhere. Brambleclaw noticed as well, eyes flicking past all the warriors, then his calm amber gaze landed back on Russetfur.

"Why did you come?" He demanded.

"We need the territory," She snarled. "And you won't stop us. ShadowClan, attack!"

And with screeches of fury, the patrol launched into a flurry of claws and teeth. Twilightpaw staggered back as a gray tabby warrior slashed at her side. Her mouth still filled with tansy, the calico apprentice tried rolling away as he pounced on her. She battered the tabby's underbelly with her hind paws, but he didn't budge.

"Why don't you pick on someone your own size?" Brambleclaw grabbed the ShadowClan warrior by the scruff and heaved him off Twilightpaw. She blinked gratefully at her father as the enemy warrior scrambled away. She glanced around, then set her herbs safely under a holly bush.

Twilightpaw turned back to the battle just as Owlpaw, a ShadowClan warrior, leaped in front of her. She ducked as he

flashed a paw, claws unsheathed, at her ears. Twilightpaw swept her foreleg under the brown apprentice, knocking him down.

"Lionpaw!" Brambleclaw yowled as he slammed his paws onto Russetfur's tail. "Go back to camp and get backup!"

Twilightpaw's brother hesitated, dodging a blow from a sleek-furred ShadowClan warrior.

"Go!" Birchfall yowled, and Lionpaw raced back through the trees.

Smokefoot, a gray warrior, lunged after him as Russetfur growled, "Stop that apprentice!"

Twilightpaw ran towards him and bit Smokefoot's tail as hard as she could. He let out a screech of pain, and Lionpaw looked back to flash Twilightpaw a grateful glance. He scrabbled over a fallen tree and leaped out of sight.

"Well, I guess It's just you and me," Smokefoot hissed, flicking his tail out of reach, then whipped around to face Twilightpaw, sharp claws unsheathed.

Chapter 22

Twilightpaw stiffened, terrified, as Smokefoot pounced on her. The smaller apprentice gasped as his weight knocked the breath out of her lungs. Smokefoot raked his claws across her flank, and Twilightpaw winced as blood seeped out of the wound. He bit down on her hind leg, and she let out a wordless yowl of pain.

"Get off!" A familiar voice yowled, and Twilightpaw wriggled out of the gray warrior's grasp.

Jaypaw! She thought. Sure enough, Twilightpaw's blind littermate was battering Smokefoot's back with furious swipes. The warrior let out a yowl of pain and threw Jaypaw off his side. Twilightpaw rushed over to her brother, relieved to see that he was standing up again on shaky legs.

Twilightpaw slashed her claws at Smokefoot's ears, then turned around, surprised, to find Owlpaw pouncing on her tail. Before she could move out of the other apprentice's grasp, he bit down, hard, and Twilightpaw stifled a groan of pain as his thorn-sharp fangs pierced through the soft tip.

"That's for hurting my mentor!" Owlpaw snarled, and kicked Twilightpaw's legs, unbalancing her, then slashed another wound across her soft belly as she fell on her side. Twilightpaw looked around helplessly as she spotted Jaypaw fighting Smokefoot, who had recovered. She winced as Owlpaw thrust his paw at her already-wounded side, claws unsheathed.

"Pick on someone else!" Twilightpaw blinked in confusion at the commanding voice, then looked up to find Graystripe looming over Owlpaw. Lionpaw had brought back another patrol!

She stood up as Graystripe yowled, "I can handle this!"

"Twilightpaw! Are you okay?" She almost collapsed again when she heard Hollypaw's worried voice. She nodded, biting back a gasp of

pain when she put her weight on her injured leg.

Twilightpaw looked back at where Jaypaw had been fighting Smokefoot, relieved when she found Millie raking her claws across his muzzle.

"ShadowClan, retreat!" Russetfur snarled, and Owlpaw shot one last terrified glance at Graystripe, then raced away as he bared his teeth. Twilightpaw limped away from her sister.

"Twilightpaw! Where are you going?" Hollypaw asked. The calico apprentice bit through thick stalks, and hurried back to her littermate, carrying the horsetail Leafpool had wanted.

Chapter 23

Twilightpaw licked a small amount of chewed marigold onto Lionpaw's nicked ear. He ducked away, wincing.

"I don't need treatment," He mewed stubbornly. Twilightpaw shrugged, but kept licking the ointment into his bloodied ear. She was still aching from her own wounds, but those could wait. She had patients to treat.

Leafpool came back from the den, holding a mouthful of chervil in her jaws.

"Twilightpaw, I can manage now," She waved Lionpaw away with her tail after seeing he was all treated. The calico apprentice shook her head and chewed up the chervil.

"You should get treated," Leafpool sniffed at her wounded leg. "It looks serious."

With a sigh, Twilightpaw let her lick her wounds clean and smear poultice on them, wrapping her hind leg in cobwebs.

"You shouldn't have gone into the battle," Leafpool fretted as she put away the remains of the herbs. "You could've been hurt badly."

Twilightpaw shrugged. It wasn't as if she could've avoided it.

And she didn't think anything else could hurt her as badly as the wounds she already had. Twilightpaw winced as Leafpool touched her nose to her hind leg.

"You shouldn't move too much," She frowned. "It isn't broken, thank StarClan, but it could get infected, or you could be limping permanently."

Twilightpaw nodded. She heard Firestar let out a yowl.

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather around

Highrocks for a Clan meeting!"

She stood up to leave the den, but Leafpool stopped her.

"You need rest," The light brown tabby meowed firmly. "You can hear about the meeting later."

The injured apprentice reluctantly nodded, then sat back down. She waited patiently for the meeting to end, pricking her ears to catch the news.

"...deputy!" Firestar announced. Twilightpaw waited a couple of moments after the meeting ended, and Hollypaw, Lionpaw, and Jaypaw burst into the medicine den.

"Twilightpaw! Did you hear what Firestar said?" Lionpaw asked excitedly. Twilightpaw shook her head.

"Brambleclaw's staying as the Clan deputy!" Hollypaw blurted. Jaypaw remained silent, and Twilightpaw could see his blind blue gaze firmly on the ground, looking thoughtful and disturbed.

"Don't disturb my patient," Leafpool scolded gently. She guided the three apprentices out of her den.

"But she's your apprentice!" Twilightpaw heard Lionpaw complain.

"That doesn't mean her life is any less important," Leafpool mewed. Twilightpaw listened for a couple more heartbeats, then nestled back inside her nest.

Her last thoughts before slipping into a deep sleep were: *How come Jaypaw seemed to know about Firestar's decision?*

Chapter 24

"Leafpool, I need to speak with you." Twilightpaw woke up to the sound of Jaypaw's urgent mew. She gingerly tested her injured leg, and sighed in relief when it only ached.

"What is it?" Leafpool hurried over to Jaypaw. "Are you in pain? Do you have an infection?"

"No, nothing like that. I just need to talk with you and Firestar," The tabby apprentice glanced at Twilightpaw. "Alone."

Twilightpaw looked curiously at her littermate. What was so private that she couldn't know? Then she turned to Leafpool. The light brown she-cat had frozen, panic shadowing her amber gaze.

"Of course," The ThunderClan medicine cat dipped her head, but Twilightpaw couldn't help but notice her troubled mew. "Twilightpaw, call me if you need anything."

Leafpool left the medicine den, with Jaypaw at her tail. He shot an apologizing look at Twilightpaw and squeezed outside.

The calico apprentice watched them climb Highrocks, then stood up as Leafpool slipped inside Firestar's den. She padded outside the medicine den and towards Brook, who was guarding the camp entrance.

"Where are you going?" Brooks asked. The apprentice just dipped her head in greeting and ran through the forest. She needed time to think and clear her mind.

"Twilightpaw!" She heard the Tribe-cat call, but the calico she-cat dug her claws in the earth and swerved past the trees.

When she finally slowed down, Twilightpaw was facing the lake's rippling surface. She sat down on the soft ground and curled her tail neatly around her body. She peered down at the clear surface,

expecting to see her reflection. The medicine cat apprentice withdrew a gasp of surprise when she saw Yellowfang's broad face staring straight at her.

"There will be three, kin of your kin, who hold the power of the stars in their paws, and only twilight will protect them from harm," The StarClan cat growled. "This was the prophecy given to Firestar moons ago. And I have a message for you: Protect the Three."

What? Twilightpaw blinked. She opened her mouth to speak, but Yellowfang was already gone.

Chapter 25

"Twilightpaw!" Stormfur burst out of the undergrowth. "There you are! Brook was worried when you ran off without telling her where you went. Are you alright? You look kind of far away."

Twilightpaw shook out her pelt to clear her mind of the thousands of questions she had for Yellowfang, then nodded. Stormfur's amber gaze softened, and he turned back towards the forest.

"Come on, let's get back to camp." He meowed. "Leafpool will be wondering where you went."

Twilightpaw nodded again and plunged in after him, but her mind was somewhere else.

The Three...who are they? How do I protect cats I don't even know about?

And...

Why me? Why not Jaypaw, Lionpaw, or Hollypaw?

She kept walking in silence, wondering why StarClan had chosen her. Stormfur was padding in front of her, occasionally turning around to make sure Twilightpaw was following him.

"Look," The dark gray warrior finally broke the silence with a sigh. "I know you like to keep to yourself rather than talking to someone, but sometimes you should answer a question when. someone asks, alright?"

Twilightpaw just stared at him.

"Just don't run off next time," Stormfur warned before briskly pushing past the bramble entrance and headed near Highrocks, where his mate anxioiusly awaited his return.

Twilightpaw slipped through after him, and padded over to

Leafpool, who had just leaped down from the crumbling rocks. She tilted her head, wondering what had happened in Firestar's den.

"Well, I've got unexpected news," Leafpool looked deeply relieved, yet troubled. "Jaypaw's no longer training to be a warrior. He's going to be training with you."

Chapter 26

"Twilightpaw!" Leafpool called, looking up from a marigold poultice she was mixing. "Can you go fetch Jaypaw? He's in the elder's den."

Twilightpaw nodded. She slipped out the medicine den and padded towards Mousefur and Longtail's den. The calico apprentice poked her head inside. Sure enough, Jaypaw was there, dabbing moss soaked with mouse bile on Longtail's fur.

"What do you want?" He snapped, looking up from the bile-soaked moss.

Twilightpaw stood there for a few moments before mewing, "Leafpool."

Her littermate let out a big groan. "What does she want?"

She shrugged. Jaypaw's impatient blue gaze pierced straight through her, as if he could see the calico she-cat. "Fine," he snarled before brushing past her. "Don't blame me if Longtail gets an infected tick bite."

Twilightpaw ignored his grumpy remark, knowing very well that his anger was not aimed at her. She swept some scattered bracken from Longtail's nest away with her tail and picked up the stick holding the soaked moss.

"Don't mind Jaypaw," Longtail rumbled, whiskers twitching as he listened to Twilightpaw and Jaypaw's exchange. "He's probably just tired after the battle."

She dabbed the stinking moss at the blind elder's side, and a plump flea fell onto the sandy ground.

"That's better." He grunted, then nodded towards Mousefur. "Check Mousefur now. I think she had a huge tick behind her ear."

Twilightpaw nosed through Longtail's tabby fur one last time before

moving on to Mousefur, who was flicking her ear impatiently.

"Took you long enough," She grumbled as Twilightpaw cracked the tick's blood-filled body; it really was big. The apprentice just quietly rummaged through her thin brown fur.

When she was done with tick duty, Twilightpaw dipped her head in farewell and pushed past the den entrance and slipped through the wide crack that was the entrance to the medicine den. Inside, Jaypaw was shredding some mallow leaves carelessly from their stems. Leafpool watched, her tail lashing in frustration.

Twilightpaw silently sat down besides her brother and swept the leaves that were damaged beyond repair away with her black-tipped tail, and nipped the dangling stems off the ones that could be dried later.

"Thank you, Twilightpaw," Leafpool sighed in irritation.

"Not my fault I never wanted to be a medicine cat," Jaypaw snarled. "You both always knew what you wanted."

Twilightpaw blinked, surprised, when Leafpool bristled, her hackles raised threateningly.

"You know nothing of what I wanted!" The medicine cat snapped, then her voice cracked. She turned her back on both of her apprentices and stalked out the den.

What was that about? Twilightpaw wondered. *I guess some cats don't get what they'd like.*

She thought of Hollypaw, who had given up her dream to become a medicine cat for Twilightpaw to become Leafpool's apprentice instead.

And she spent the rest of the day stripping mallow leaves and wondering who the Three could possibly be.

Chapter 27

It had been a few day since Twilightpaw had heard from Yellowfang in the lake. It was time for them to go to the Moonpool and meet the other medicine cats.

"Come on, Jaypaw," Leafpool called from besides Twilightpaw. "We need to get going."

"Okay, okay," Jaypaw walked over to them. "What will the other medicine cats say when they see that you have two apprentices?"

"They'll understand," Leafpool mewed briskly, but Twilightpaw saw her fur prickling with doubt.

"It's time to share with StarClan," Barkface rasped. He touched his nose to the starry surface of the Moonpool, and the other cats all quickly followed his lead.

Twilightpaw closed her eyes and lapped at a few drops of icy water. She opened them again and found herself staring straight at three cats. She immediately recognized Yellowfang's matted fur and Bluestar's blue-gray pelt studded with stars, but didn't recognize the last cat.

The unknown cat was a tom with broad shoulders and a golden pelt, a furry mane of yellow fur around his neck. Twilightpaw tilted her head at the unfamiliar cat.

"I am Lionheart," He rumbled, his amber eyes glowing with warmth. "I was a warrior of ThunderClan when Firestar first entered the forest."

Twilightpaw blinked. He looked like a larger version of Lionpaw. For a split second, she wondered why the three StarClan cats had come to her, when she remembered about her vision at the lake.

"Find the Three," Bluestar meowed. "Find them and protect them. They should be easy to find, for all of them are in ThunderClan."

"And related to you," Yellowfang added. "There will be three, kin of Firestar's kin, who have the power of the stars in their paws. You are kin of Firestar's kin."

Twilightpaw felt a rush of understanding. Her littermates were the Three! They had the power of the stars in their paws! And she had to protect them.

"How?" The calico she-cat asked, her voice quivering as she felt responsibility building up on her lean shoulders.

"You will know how when the time comes," Lionheart replied. "There will be three, kin of Firestar's kin, who have the power of the stars in their paws, and only twilight can protect them."

At these words, Twilightpaw felt herself fading from StarClan's hunting grounds. She woke up with a start, Bluestar, Yellowfang, and Lionheart's words still fresh on her mind.

Jaypaw, Hollypaw, and Lionpaw will one day be stronger than StarClan, she realized with a sickening lurch.

And I'll *have to be the cat to protect them!*

Chapter 28

"Mousefur has Greencough!" Jaypaw burst into the medicine den. Twilightpaw was inside, sorting the herbs that helped with coughs and sickness. Mousefur had been wheezing the past few days, saying that it was just the cold getting to her bones.

Leafbare was coming, and Leafpool had ordered Twilightpaw and Jaypaw to gather herbs before they were damaged by the frost.

Twilightpaw grabbed a few tansy and feverfew leaves. They hadn't gathered catmint yet, and if the snow came before Mousefur got better, she might not survive Leafbare.

"Where's Leafpool?" Jaypaw asked, his eyes wide with panic. "We need catmint!"

"Outside," Twilightpaw answered, her jaws full of the fragrant herbs. She whisked out the den and hurried towards the elder's den.

When she slipped inside, Twilightpaw immediately smelled the bitter scent of sickness, even over the tangy taste of tansy.

"I tell you, I'm fine," Mousefur rasped. Her eyes were milky with fever, and Twilightpaw quickly pushed a few feverfew leaves under the sick elder's nose.

"Eat," Longtail prompted. "It'll make you feel better."

"You're all fussing over nothing," Mousefur let out a rusty purr, her eyes flashing with pain at the effort. "Anyone would think that I'm going to be joining StarClan anytime soon."

Twilightpaw knew that this could become very true, but she kept the thought to herself as she nudged more tansy under Mousefur's muzzle. Her dull brown pelt radiated with heat, and Twilightpaw felt her stomach lurch with hopelessness.

"She'll be alright soon, right?" Longtail prompted.

"Twilightpaw?" He asked again, gently, when she didn't reply. The calico apprentice nodded numbly and hurried out the den. She almost bumped into Jaypaw on the way back to the medicine den.

"We need catmint," He hissed. Twilightpaw nodded, and ran over to Cloudtail, who was nearest.

"Twilightpaw?" His mew was filled with surprised. "Is everything alright?"

She shook her head. "Need someone to help fetch catmint."

"Is someone sick?" The white-furred warrior asked.

"Mousefur." Twilightpaw dug her claws into the ground.

"Cinderpaw!" Cloudail called to his apprentice. Sure enough, the dark gray apprentice bounded towards them from near the halfrock.

"What is it?" She prompted.

"I need you to go help Twilightpaw fetch catmint near the Twoleg den."

"Catmint? That's for Greencough, isn't it?" Cinderpaw gasped. "Come on, Twilightpaw!"

Twilightpaw raced after her friend out into the forest, heading for the abandoned Twoleg den.

Hold on, Mousefur! She thought as she swerved past a tree. *Don't go to StarClan just yet! We'll save you.*

I promise.

Chapter 29

Twilightpaw ran so fast that she passed Cinderpaw and the trees were brown and green blurs. She slowed down as she saw the crumbling stone walls of the abandoned Twoleg den. She jumped onto one of the sturdier walls and walked precariously on the top, searching for any soft green leaves.

"Wow, you're fast," Cinderpaw panted as she skidded to a stop next to the den. By then Twilightpaw was tasting the air, trying to scent the delicious smell of catmint. She leaped off the rubble and sniffed the ground for any trace of the herb.

"I don't see or smell anything," Cinderpaw sighed, hurrying across the frozen grass. "Maybe the frost killed- oh!"

Twilightpaw rushed towards the fluffy gray she-cat. "Oh StarClan," Cinderpaw breathed. "Twilightpaw, everything's black and covered in frost! What do we do?"

Twilightpaw blinked at the pitiful lump of blackened catmint, scorched by the frost. She nosed the damaged stems away, desperate for any remaining stalks that could have escaped the cold. She stiffened as she smelled a sweeter, more delicious scent deeper in the pulpy black leaves.

"Did you find anything?" Cinderpaw asked desperately. Twilightpaw shook her head but used one slender paw to push aside the frostbitten catmint, afraid that with every gentle movement she might damage the roots.

Sure enough, a few smaller, but green and fresh leaves sprouted out of the hard, frozen ground. She bit through the stems and nestled the rare herb softly on her tongue, trying not to soak up all the delicious flavor.

"You found some!" Cinderpaw yelped. "Let's get back and tell

Leafpool about the catmint."

Twilightpaw nodded and ran back to the camp, praying that the small portion of catmint would be enough to heal Mousefur.

"You did well," Leafpool congratulated, but frowned as she sniffed the pitiful stalks. "Is this all?"

"Frostbitten." Twilightpaw mewed simply.

"It'll be enough. For now," Leafpool picked up some of the catmint and padded over to Mousefur, who was lying down on a moss nest in the medicine den. They'd moved her because Longtail might catch the deadly sickness from her.

"Is that catmint?" Mousefur rasped.

"Yes." Leafpool nodded. "Eat all of it."

"Save it for the younger cats." The stubborn elder pushed the herbs away.

"No one else is sick," Leafpool prompted. "You're the only cat who needs catmint. Come on, eat it up."

"Fine," Mousefur licked up the fragrant leaves, her eyes clouded in pain. Twilightpaw stared at the sick elder, wishing that there wouldn't be anymore need of the rest of the catmint they'd saved.

Chapter 30

Praying had been no use. Dawn brought on another patient, and Twilightpaw was soaking a bundle of moss in the small pool in the medicine to give to Ferncloud.

"Thank you, Twilightpaw," The queen gasped between coughs. Twilightpaw pushed the moss closer towards Ferncloud. It broke her heart to see the cat that had fostered her when Squirrelflight's milk hadn't come to be so sick.

"Twilightpaw?" Jaypaw poked his head through the entrance. "Whitewing's coughing. Can you give me some tansy for her throat?"

Twilightpaw sighed and got up. She rummaged through their store, which was running low, and returned to her littermate with the herbs he requested.

She felt helpless as all the cats that came down with Greencough were being sent to the medicine den.

"Thanks," Jaypaw took the tansy and hurried outside the den. Twilightpaw heard some rustling by the entrance, and Leafpool emerged from the bramble tunnel.

"Twilightpaw, go bring Whitewing here. She's caught Greencough and I don't want anyone else getting it."

Twilightpaw nodded and checked Ferncloud was drinking before rushing out the den. She slipped inside the warrior's den and found Jaypaw urging the white warrior to eat the herbs.

"Did I forget anything?" Jaypaw glanced up from Whitewing's nest and stared blindly at her. Twilightpaw shook her head.

"Bringing Whitewing to the medicine den," Twilightpaw nudged Whitewing, wincing as she felt heat rising from the she-cat's pelt.

She let Whitewing lean on her small body for support.

"I'm so sorry, Twilightpaw," The warrior stumbled as a cough racked her body. Twilightpaw heaved herself up, barely standing. She couldn't lift Whitewing onto her lean shoulders, let alone walking all the way to the medicine den. The she-cat was quite larger than the lithe apprentice.

"Here," Twilightpaw felt a bit of the young warrior's weight lifting. She turned around to see Jaypaw letting Whitewing lean on his shoulders. He was also undersized, but still slightly bigger than Twilightpaw, and he had trained to be a warrior for part of his apprenticeship. He was stronger than her.

Twilightpaw and Jaypaw led Whitewing slowly towards the medicine den, half carrying, half stumbling after her.

"Thank StarClan you're here!" Twilightpaw blinked as she saw a dappled tortoiseshell pelt in a small nest. *Poppypaw?*

"It's Poppypaw," Leafpool explained, worry sparking in her amber eyes. "She's caught Greencough, and she's getting worse."

Chapter 31

Twilightpaw gazed at the sick, coughing cats in their nests, her odd eyes troubled. Mousefur, Ferncloud, and Whitewing were joined by Poppypaw during the day. The speckled tortoiseshell she-cat's eyes were sticky with pus, and she was scarcely breathing.

"Leafpool!" Twilightpaw turned around and saw Sorreltail outside the medicine den. "Barkface and Kestrelpaw want to see you."

Leafpool hurried out the herb store, her pelt dusty and smelling strongly of tansy. "What do they need?"

Jaypaw padded towards Twilightpaw. "I smell WindClan. What do they want?"

She shrugged, but pricked her ears as Barkface pushed through the den. "WindClan is struggling with Greencough," He rasped. "We were wondering whether you have any catmint to spare."

"We've been hit with Greencough as well," Leafpool swished her tail anxiously. "But RiverClan might have some."

"Then go ask for some!" Jaypaw grunted.

"I don't want to put Mothwing in a difficult position," Leafpool snapped.

"But what if she had plenty of catmint to spare, and she found out we were suffering from Greencough?" Jaypaw pressed, his paws scraping at the ground impatiently. Twilightpaw tilted her head when she saw her mentor's amber eyes widening in dismay. "She'd be devastated!"

"Alright," Leafpool sighed at last. "I'll go to RiverClan with Barkface and Kestrelpaw. You stay here to look after the sick cats with Twilightpaw."

Twilightpaw tensed. She and Jaypaw were in charge of all these

cats, and with Poppypaw barely hanging onto life, she wasn't sure she could handle it.

"You'll be alright," Leafpool layed her tail gently on her shoulder. Twilightpaw stared doubtfully at the ground, gazing at a small marigold leaf that was half buried in the sandy ground. She glanced up to find Leafpool already padding out the den.

"Come on," Jaypaw brushed past Twilightpaw and soaked a wad of moss in the pool, and nudged it close to Mousefur's mouth. Her tongue lapped eagerly at the moisture, but her eyes remained closed. Twilightpaw walked over to Ferncloud. The queen was reciting her kit's names over and over again. Whitewing whimpered in her sleep. Poppypaw didn't move a muscle, her flank barely rising and falling.

Twilightpaw wondered whether any of them would survive the night.

Chapter 32

Twilightpaw sniffed Ferncloud's flank. Her breathing had become more rhythmic and strong, and she was feeling cooler.

"Twilightpaw!" She turned around and saw Sorreltail standing in front of the entrance of the medicine den. The apprentice nudged the worried she-cat gently out of the den.

"Poppypaw won't get better, won't she?" The tortoiseshell warrior whispered. "She's going to die, and I'll lose another kit!"

Twilightpaw had heard of Molekit, Sorreltail's dead kit who had not survived a bought of Greencough.

She hesitated, before shaking her head. I'll save Poppypaw, she promised silently. And so will Jaypaw.

"Sorreltail?" Brackenfur called, padding out of the warrior's den. He ushered her out of the den. "Come on, don't disturb Twilightpaw from her patients."

"But I need to see Poppypaw!" Sorreltail wailed. "She could be *dying*!"

"Nonsense," Brackenfur mewed briskly before leading his mate outside. "Poppypaw will survive." But his eyes were dark with worry.

Twilightpaw turned back to the sick cats. Whitewing seemed a bit better, her breathing less ragged.

But Poppypaw...

The calico she-cat stiffened as she saw the tortoiseshell-and-white apprentice barely breathing, her eyes still shut tight with pus. Her breaths were coming short and shallow, and Twilightpaw almost yowled when she saw her blind littermate curled up right next to her, looking as if he was almost dead.

Jaypaw...! Twilightpaw thought with despair. No! Is he sick as well?

She gently felt his flank with a slender paw, and was both relieved and surprised to find no fever. Confused, Twilightpaw padded out the den. She had a feeling that Jaypaw would keep her alive until Leafpool came back with the catmint.

Not that I know how he's doing that, Twilightpaw thought wryly. *It could be anything...*

Even something to do with the Three.

"Twilightpaw?" She jumped, startled, then relaxed when she saw that it was only Lionpaw. The lithe apprentice turned to her brother.

"Is everything okay?" He asked, his amber eyes clouded with worry and tiredness. She nodded, and Lionpaw gave her a quick lick.

"Where's Jaypaw? Is he alright?" He looked at the medicine den. Twilightpaw nodded, and stared at the ground, where the sand was clean and streaked with moonlight. Her eyes followed a poppyseed that blew out of the medicine den.

That's impossible, She thought. *Our poppyseed stash is wrapped with beech leaves. A seed couldn't have possibly rolled out of the den.*

Suddenly, a gust of wind blew strongly against Twilightpaw and Lionpaw.

"Wow, it sure is chilly tonight!" He shivered. Lionpaw was lucky to have such a thick coat, Twilightpaw mused. Her own pelt was much thinner and less wind-repellant.

She stiffened when she saw a long, blue feather ride the powerful current, and sweep the poppyseed through the bramble screen and back inside the medicine den. Twilightpaw hurried back inside.

"Hey! Twilightpaw? Are you okay?" Lionpaw called. She ignored her littermate and stared at the two objects laid on the ground.

A feather and a poppyseed. A jay's feather, Twilightpaw realized. A

poppyseed outside the den, a jay's feather guiding it back inside...StarClan couldn't have been clearer.

Jaypaw's going to bring Poppypaw back to the Clans!

Chapter 33

Twilightpaw carefully picked up the feather and pushed it out of the den, and poked the poppyseed back inside the dried poppy. She then rushed back to Poppypaw, and saw that Jaypaw was muttering in his sleep.

"...come...back," He whispered, and suddenly fell still. Twilightpaw frantically nudged her brother until Jaypaw finally opened his jay-feather blue eyes.

"Alright, alright, I'm awake," He grumbled, and peered over at Poppypaw. She seemed calmer, her breathing steady and less desperate. Just then, Leafpool emerged from the darkness of the bramble barrier, her mouth filled with catmint.

"Jaypaw! Twilightpaw!" She dropped the large bundle of the precious healing herb. "Mothwing gave us all enough catmint to give to all the sick cats. She had a big supply of catmint, and she would have given us sooner if she had known."

Jaypaw snorted.

"Well, enough chatter. Twilightpaw, give Ferncloud and Whitewing a bit of catmint. I need to check on Poppypaw and Mousefur," Leafpool continued, giving Jaypaw a quizzical look. Twilightpaw sniffed the fragrant catmint and picked up a few leaves gently in her teeth. She padded over to Ferncloud and pushed a bit of the herb under her nose.

"Thank you, dear," The gray-speckled queen croaked before licking up the precious leaves slowly. Twilightpaw rested her tail on her for a moment for comfort, then moved on to Whitewing. The young warrior was still asleep, and heat still rose from her white pelt.

Twilightpaw nudged the white she-cat awake and shoved a pawful of catmint gently in front of her.

"Did the others get any?" Whitewing asked, her green eyes flashing with pain and worry. Twilightpaw nodded as she watched Leafpool sniff at Mousefur's flank. The warrior let out a sigh of relief as she chewed on the delicious green stems.

"Twilightpaw. Jaypaw." Twilightpaw looked around to see Sorreltail sitting besides Poppypaw.

"Are you sick too?" Jaypaw nosed the tortoiseshell she-cat's red-black pelt.

"No. I don't know how, but I know you two helped Poppypaw survive the night," The warrior almost sobbed. "Thank you."

Twilightpaw looked on as Honeypaw emerged from the entrance and guided her mother out the den with her pale golden tail.

For the first time in moons, she felt a tingle of pride spread through her body as if she had just swallowed a mouthful of milk.

Chapter 34

Twilightpaw gazed at the patrol of cats prepared to leave the stone hollow. Hollypaw, Lionpaw, and Jaypaw stood near the edge of the crowd.

"Bye, Twilightpaw!" Hollypaw purred, nuzzling her sister. The black she-cat's green eyes glowed with excitement. "I'll tell you all about tonight's Gathering."

The full moon glowed brightly, a shining white orb in the dark sky. Twilightpaw glanced up at Silverpelt, shivering as she thought of the alternate where Poppypaw had joined StarClan. Jaypaw had told her all about how he had brought the tortoiseshell apprentice back when she wandered into StarClan.

"You're not sad that you're not going, right?" Lionpaw asked anxiously, his tail disturbing the dead leaves on the ground. Twilightpaw shook her head, and noticed the glimmer in his amber eyes. It was different from Hollypaw's shining eyes, that glowed with excitement.

Lionpaw looked excited, yes, but there was a sort of hunger, worry, guilt, and love clouding his eyes. Jaypaw seemed to notice, and he narrowed his sightless eyes.

"Come on! Let's go! Firestar's waiting!" Lionpaw quickly mewed, and hurried away. Twilightpaw looked at Firestar. He was chatting with Sandstorm and Graystripe.

"See you, Twilightpaw," Hollypaw meowed quickly before following her brother. Jaypaw turned to Twilightpaw.

"Is it just me or is Lionpaw hiding something?" He asked. Twilightpaw shook her head.

"Wonder what it is." Jaypaw turned away. "I'll find out soon enough." She heard the gray tabby tom grumble before

disappearing in the crowd of cats buzzing with excitement.

I wonder what his power is, Twilightpaw thought. *Perhaps I should ask. But I don't think I should tell Hollypaw and Lionpaw just yet.*

It's just not their time yet. They're not prepared.

Especially Hollypaw. She won't like the pressure.

And her last thought:

What if someone finds out and tries to kill us all?

Chapter 35

Time passed quickly. The sun rose at dawn and set at night. Nothing interesting had happened during the past quarter moon, except when dogs had attacked WindClan and ThunderClan had went to help them. Strangely, Jaypaw seemed to already know about the attack.

"Just something StarClan told me," He had shrugged, but Twilightpaw didn't think StarClan normally gave a medicine cat from another clan warning a dog attack.

Now Twilightpaw was padding over to the lake, where Leafpool had told her to collect some mallow. She sniffed at the ground and looked around for the wide furry leaves. Sure enough, a large clump of the herb was growing thickly nearby. Twilightpaw nipped the leaves off and picked the mallow up in her jaws and was prepared to go back to camp when she spotted a long stick.

What a strange looking stick, she thought, carefully setting down the bundle of leaves. The stick was long and wide, stripped smooth of rough bark. The weirdest part of the stick was the neat claw scratches on its surface. The scratches on the top were scratched over by another claw mark, but further down, a small portion of the marks were not crossed out.

The claw scratches were too small to be made by a fox or badger, and when Twilightpaw traced a scratch with a claw, she was surprised to find it fit perfectly in the claw mark.

These scratches were made by a cat, she realized. The calico she-cat laid down and placed her paws on the stick.

She heard a raspy voice muttering words too quiet for her to hear. She saw a hairless cat with bulging white eyes touching each scratch as he spoke. Twilightpaw listened intently as he reached the end of the stick. But when the mysterious cat started to whisper as he touched one of the uncrossed scratches, he choked on his words

and fell silent. Twilightpaw watched as the vision faded away.

This stick is precious, she thought. *It holds my future. Lionpaw, Hollypaw, Jaypaw, and my future.*

Twilightpaw looked at the stick and stroked its smooth surface once more. Suddenly, a bright beam of light streamed out of the stick and engulfed her.

When the light died down, Twilightpaw was nowhere to be seen.

Chapter 36

Where am I? Twilightpaw tried looking around, but she was surrounded by darkness. She was very small, even smaller than Foxkit and Icekit.

She tried walking, but a slimy wall blocked her path. She tried turning around, but she hit the same wet substance again. Something bumped into her, and Twilightpaw tried to open her eyes again.

What is this place? She wondered. The calico she-cat was suddenly aware that her breath had caught in her throat, and she could not breathe. She tried to suck in a breath, but her lungs did not allow it. Twilightpaw began to panic, and she squirmed in the small place she was in.

I can't breathe, but why do I feel so full of breath like I'm breathing? She thought. Twilightpaw pushed the wall again, aware that she was surrounded by slimy water. She suddenly hit a hard surface, and a faraway yowl echoed in her ears.

"It won't be long now, Rising Moon, " Twilightpaw heard. The voice belonged to a she-cat, but she didn't recognize her. "Push as hard as you can when I tell you to."

"Is she alright?" This time it was a tom speaking. "I don't think it's supposed to take this long. Is something going wrong?"

"I'm fine, Chasing Clouds," A different she-cat's voice panted, as if she had been running through the entire forest nonstop. "The kits are just taking their time, that's all."

Kits! I'm Rising Moon's unborn kit! Twilightpaw suddenly realized. *I must be dreaming.*

But it felt too real as she felt something- her 'littermate', she guessed- shoving hard at the hard wall she was pushing at.

This must be Rising Moon's stomach, Twilightpaw guessed. Rising Moon let out a screech of pain.

"Rising Moon!" The tom, Chasing Clouds, gasped.

"Broken Shadow!" Rising Moon let out a dreadful screech.

"Push now!" The she-cat who Twilightpaw thought was helping deliver Rising Moon's kits ordered, and Twilightpaw felt the inside of Rising Moon's belly heave and squeeze her hard. The kit beside her was being pushed forward by the force, and Twilightpaw felt it leave her side. The sac that she was in suddenly felt very delicate as she was shoved forward as well.

Chapter 37

"I see one coming!" Broken Shadow called, then stopped. "It's too big! It can't get out!"

Twilightpaw tried to let out a gasp as a strong push sent the wall she was besides push inwards, but she couldn't open her mouth. Rising Moon let out a screech of protest, and Twilightpaw felt her tensing with pain.

"He's out!" Broken Shadow shouted, and there was a short pause. "A tom!"

"Oh, Rising Moon," Chasing Clouds whispered. "He's beautiful."

"He looks like you," Rising Moon agreed, and she suddenly broke off as she gasped in pain.

Is it my turn yet? Twilightpaw thought, but when Rising Moon let out another screech, she was still in the queen's stomach.

"This one's a bit big as well. This might hurt, Rising Moon." Broken Shadow warned, and hard pump made Twilightpaw's side hurt.

"Chasing Clouds!" Rising Moon moaned. "I can't do this! Stop, Broken Shadow!"

"I need to," Broken Shadow's mew was determined, but Twilightpaw heard the tremor of fear in her confident voice. "Don't worry, everything will be fine."

"Is there supposed to be so much blood?" Chasing Cloud's mew was taunt with worry.

"Look, Rising Moon! The second one's out!" Broken Shadow let out a small sigh of relief. "You have a beautiful daughter."

"Oh, my precious kit," Rising Moon whispered. "She's perfect."

"You're not done, Rising Moon," Broken Shadow warned. "You have two more kits to deliver, and you're already exhausted. Save your energy."

A kit squirmed besides Twilightpaw, and she was relieved when she felt that it was not as big as the ones that went before.

"Here comes the next one!" Broken Shadow called. "It's not as big as the other two, Rising Moon, but they damaged you more than enough. It will be easier, but still painful."

"Oh!" Rising Moon gasped, and her stomach lurched.

"Just hold on for a few more heartbeats and it'll be out." Chasing Clouds promised, his voice filled with fright. Rising Moon let out a shriek, and the kit besides Twilightpaw was pushed out to the world.

"Another she-cat!" Broken Shadow announced. "Only one left now, Rising Moon."

Twilightpaw felt dread pounding through her head.

It was her turn now.

Chapter 38

Twilightpaw felt Rising Moon's stomach heaving with effort, but the pushes felt weak and powerless. She felt the top half of the sac shove against a narrowed tunnel, but Twilightpaw didn't push outside Rising Moon's belly.

"Rising Moon!" Broken Shadow urged. "Just one more push and you're done."

Rising Moon gave one more strong, desperate push, and Twilightpaw felt cold air whip at her head. She was glad that the sac gave at least a little protection against the cold, but panicked when she felt herself longing for a gasp of air. Her legs and tail were still inside Rising Moon's belly.

"This one is small," Broken Shadow promised. "It just hurts because it's reopening the injuries the first two gave you."

"I can't!" Rising Moon wailed. "It hurts too much! Chasing Clouds! Chasing Clouds!"

Twilightpaw could feel the queen's tail trembling against her head.

"Rising Moon, think about the kits! Just one more push!" Chasing Clouds whispered. "Please!"

Rising Moon let out a final, pain-filled cry before pushing as hard as she could. Twilightpaw felt herself slipping easily out from under the queen's tail. Someone nipped the kit-sac open, and the calico kit tumbled out onto the warm moss. Twilightpaw realized that she couldn't breathe, and squirmed on the ground.

"She can't breathe!" Broken Shadow gasped. A cat gently picked her up and rubbed some warmth into her wet fur, and started pumping her chest, hard. Twilightpaw felt the mucus clogging her throat come up, and she vomited out the slimy liquid and drew in a gasp of air.

"She's so small," Rising Moon whispered. "Welcome to the world, little ones."

She couldn't open her eyes yet, but Twilightpaw felt a gentle tongue licking her dry. Someone gave her a little push, and she wandered over to a warm, bulky body that smelled of milk.

This must be Rising Moon, the calico kit realized. *My 'mother'. Do I need to drink milk again?*

"Eat well," Rising Moon urged, and Twilightpaw felt two other bodies besides her. Her mother nudged her towards her belly, and she had no other choice but to latch onto her belly. Twilightpaw felt the warm milk enter her body, heating her entire body.

In this other world, with the smell of moss, milk, love, and blood, Twilightpaw felt right at home as she fell into a deep sleep.

Chapter 39

"What do we name them?" Twilightpaw woke up to the sound of Chasing Cloud's voice. It had been over two sunrises since she had been kitted for a second time, and she had finally stretched open her eyes. Twilightpaw had seen herself for the first time she'd been 'kitted', and she looked just like herself in ThunderClan. Her 'brother' had gray-and-white fur like Chasing Clouds, though his eyes were amber instead of his father's bright blue.

"This tom-kit looks just like you, Chasing Clouds," Rising Moon purred. "I think he should be called Gray Storm."

"Gray Storm it is," Chasing Clouds agreed. "What about this one?"

He nudged Twilightpaw's sister, who had short white fur and clear blue eyes.

"Half Moon," Rising Moon suggested. "After my mother."

Twilightpaw suddenly saw a tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes, and the vision flashed for a heartbeat before disappearing.

"That's a great name," Chasing Clouds meowed. "What about naming this she-kit Leaf Patch?"

He curled his tail around Twilightpaw's other sister, a white kit with brown patches and green eyes.

"Leaf Patch," Rising Moon echoed. "I love the name. What about this last kit?'

She drew Twilightpaw closer towards her belly.

"Her eyes are unique," Chasing Clouds commented, staring into her odd eyes. "They look as bright as stars. They are strange, but beautiful. Her pelt is as colorful as the twilight sky."

"Then her name should be Twilight Sky," Rising Moon purred, and

at the same time, Chasing Clouds suggested, "Her name could be Twilight Sky."

The two cats let out purrs of amusement.

"What about Twilight Moons?" Rising Moon suggested. "Her eyes look like two full moons."

Chasing Clouds hesitated. It was clear that he liked Twilight Sky better.

"Or maybe just Twilight Sky," He decided.

"Twilight Sky is a wonderful name," Rising Moon smiled warmly at Twilightpaw. Her gray fur patched with white was nothing like Twilightpaw's calico pelt, and her light blue eyes were almost the opposite of her bright green and dark blue eyes.

"Gray Storm," Gray Storm mewled. "I like it!"

"Leaf Patch is better!" Leaf Patch squealed before tumbling on the moss nest with her brother in her paws.

"I like my name," Half Moon looked up at Rising Moon. "It's pretty."

Twilight Sky, Twilightpaw repeated in her head. Her new name.

"Do you like your name, Twilight Sky?" Chasing Clouds prompted. He looked nothing like Twilightpaw as well, but his eyes shone with love. She nodded absentmindedly.

Twilight Sky, Twilight Sky, Twilight Sky, Twilightpaw echoed over and over again in her mind, not noticing Rising Moon's worried look.

Will I be able to be Twilightpaw again?

Chapter 40

"Wake up." An unfamiliar voice whispered. Twilightpaw woke up, her ears pricked. She'd slept besides Rising Moon, with Half Moon, Leaf Patch, and Gray Storm next to her, but now, she was alone in a dark stone cave.

Twilightpaw scrambled to her paws and looked around. Stone walls surrounded her, and an underground river rippled besides her. Five tunnels that led to different directions were spread throughout the large cave.

"You're finally awake," She turned around to find a orange-and-white tom staring at her with curious green eyes. He was older than her, and smelled of no cat she had ever met.

No, that's not true, Twilightpaw realized. *He smells like Rising Moon, Chasing Clouds, Dark Whiskers, and my 'littermates'. He's one of those cats I somehow became.*

"Twilight Sky." She stiffened as the mysterious tom meowed her new name out loud. "You have grown, but you are still young."

Twilightpaw looked on at him silently.

"I am Fallen Leaves," He answered her unspoken question. "I died in these tunnels and have walked them since I have drowned. I visited Rising Moon to see her kits when I was still alive, and saw you among them. But I died seasons ago. Why are you still alive?"

Twilightpaw blinked, the answer hitting her as he spoke.

I was living in the past. I was born in ancient times, and I have reincarnated into this body seasons later.

"I don't know. Fell asleep." Was all she could muster at the moment of shock.

"Well, I don't know how a cat can sleep for seasons and wake up

hundreds of moons later still alive," Fallen Leaves's eyes glimmered with amusement. "But I know that you are lost. Take this tunnel and keep going forward. That will take you to your territory."

Twilightpaw listened to the instructions, and dipped her head in farewell before taking the tunnel he pointed to.

"If you get lost again, just call for me!" Fallen Leaves yowled after her.

Twilightpaw padded on through the tunnel, still shaken by the answer she had gotten. She spotted sunlight pouring through a small opening which she could pass through easily.

I wonder if Jaypaw will believe me if I told them about this? She thought, trying to imagine her grumpy, sarcastic brother believing her story. *He* is *a medicine cat, and Hollypaw and Lionpaw won't understand.*

I don't want to frighten them, She thought. *I'm shaken enough, and knowing the past didn't ease my pain in knowing I have to protect my littermates from death.*

It increased it.

But the next time I see the past, I'll try to find Jaypaw, Lionpaw, and Hollypaw.

Should she tell Jaypaw though?

I'll tell him next time, she decided before running through the bare forest, running as fast as a dog.

But she knew, no matter how fast she ran, how long she went, that she would never outrun the past.

Chapter 41

"Twilightpaw! There you are!" Leafpool rushed out of the medicine den. "Where were you? I was worried sick!"

Twilightpaw set down the bundle of mallow she had picked up by the lake. She had went back to fetch the herbs and had run straight back to camp.

"Lost track of time," She replied as her mentor sniffed the green leaves.

"Well, at least you brought back lots of mallow," Leafpool sighed. "Jaypaw, go soak the mallow leaves overnight."

Jaypaw stood up from his nest, where he was cleaning his paws, which were still slightly green from dock. Twilightpaw watched him look over at her, his eyes sharp and knowing. Blindness had not robbed them from emotions.

"Twilightpaw, will you check on Foxkit and Icekit?" Leafpool asked. "Ferncloud said that they've been itching all over, and I'm afraid they have ticks."

Twilightpaw nodded and headed out the den again, this time holding a stick that had a bile-soaked wad of moss hanging from the tip. She was strangely not hungry at all, and she could still taste Rising Moon's sweet milk. She could still feel Leaf Patch and Gray Storm's soft kit-fur warming her body, and hear Half Moon's light breathing.

What a strange sensastion, she shivered. Twilightpaw entered the nursery and was greeted by Ferncloud.

"Icekit, Foxkit, stay still," The gray queen ordered as Twilightpaw awkwardly shifted the stick so that she could dab the stinky moss on Foxkit's side. A tick fell into the moss, and Daisy hooked the creature out with one claw before flinging it away.

"Ew!" He shied away. "This smells!"

"I know, dear, but it will ease the itching," Ferncloud soothed. Twilightpaw nosed through the young kit's russet fur, and when she found nothing, moved onto Icekit.

"Gross!" The white kit wrinkled her nose. "It's disgusting!"

Twilightpaw dabbed the mouse bile on her tail and behind her ear. The ticks quickly fell off.

"Thank you, Twilightpaw," Daisy sighed. "You won't believe how much these two have been fidgeting in their sleep."

"We haven't!" Foxkit protested.

"Yeah! You're the one who fidgets!" Icekit squealed before pouncing on her littermate.

"Kits!" Ferncloud scolded gently. Twilightpaw's whiskers twitched with amusement as she watched the she-cat trying to pry one kit off the other. She turned to head out the nursery, but just as she stepped outside, Foxkit jumped on her back and tumbled her to the ground.

Twilightpaw let out a strangled cry as she felt her eyes rolling to the back of her head, and collapsed in a pile of calico fur. Her limbs twitched violently, and she couldn't control her body.

What's happening to me? She thought. Her eyelids closed, and then everything went black.

Chapter 42

"Twilight Sky! Twilight Sky!" A panic-filled shriek filled Twilightpaw's ears. Her limbs felt numb, and she couldn't seem to open her eyes.

"What's wrong with her?" A familiar voice wailed. It was Half Moon.

"Wake up! Wake up, Twilight Sky!" Rising Moon sobbed. Twilightpaw hesitantly opened her eyes to see Rising Moon, Chasing Clouds, Leaf Patch, Gray Storm, and Half Moon peering down at her, eyes filled with fright and terror.

"You're alive!" Leaf Patch whispered, rushing to her side.

"I thought you were dead!" Half Moon cried. Gray Storm trembled as he pressed close to Twilightpaw's side, too frightened to speak.

"I want to see too!" A small gray kit squealed. "Did it look scary? Did Twilight Sky really shake all over and bleed everywhere?"

"Dove's Wing!" Falcon Swoop, a queen Twilightpaw had met the first few days she had been kitted, scolded the older kit. "Don't be rude! Twilight Sky could have died!"

"But she's not bleeding!" Dove's Wing mewed with disappointment, ignoring her mother. Her bright blue eyes were wide with dismay. "Jay's Wing said that she was shaking and bleeding! Really!"

"She's not?" A skinny gray tabby tom-kit peeked out from behind Falcon Swoop's back. His startling blue eyes were rounded with mischief. "You mouse-brain! Twilight Sky has no wounds, so of course there's no blood!"

"You liar!" Dove's Wing yowled before pouncing on her brother's tail. Jay's Wing looked strangely familiar, with his gray tabby pelt, scrawny build, and clear blue eyes.

Jaypaw! Of course! Twilightpaw stiffened with realization. The Three should be here...There was Jay's Wing, who was Jaypaw, and Twilight Sky, who was Twilightpaw herself.

But where was Hollypaw and Lionpaw? She wondered, trying to peek out the entrance to the nursery.

"Twilight Sky!" Rising Moon's sharp mew snapped her attention back to her 'mother'. "You half scared us to death! Come over here so that I can check you over."

Twilightpaw shuffled towards the white patched gray she-cat and let her check her over for any sickness.

"You seem fine," The queen seemed confused. "But I'll bring Running Horse, just in case. He should know what happened to you."

Rising Moon gave Twilightpaw a quick lick between the ears before hurrying out the den.

"Are you okay?" Half Moon whispered, her green eyes wide with shock and worry. Twilightpaw nodded, stretching her legs.

"You sure?" Gray Storm asked, still uncertain.

"We woke up and saw you twitching. Your eyes were all white, and you wouldn't wake up, even though Rising Moon tried waking you up," Leaf Patch explained, pressing even closer to her littermate that she could have lost ever so easily.

"It was scary," Gray Storm added, his. gray-tipped tail trembling. "I didn't think you'd ever wake up."

"I thought we'd lose you," Half Moon whimpered before curling up tightly besides her littermates. Twilightpaw stroked her sister with her tail before laying down besides her, and Leaf Patch closed her eyes. Gray Storm put his head down on her side.

Twilightpaw closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

In the medicine den, Twilightpaw woke up with a start.

Chapter 43

"Thank StarClan!" Leafpool sighed as Twilightpaw opened her eyes. "I didn't think you'd survive."

"Twilightpaw!" Hollypaw ran to her side and plunged her face into Twilightpaw's shoulder. "I thought you weren't going to wake up! I thought you were going to shake forever! I thought...I thought..."

Twilightpaw licked Hollypaw's shoulder reassuringly. The black she-cat looked up with frightened eyes.

"Twilightpaw! You're awake!" Lionpaw burst into the medicine den, amber eyes wide with alarm and relief. "I thought I was losing you forever! Squirrelflight and Brambleclaw are coming."

Just then, Twilightpaw's real parents squeezed inside the tight den.

"Oh, Twilightpaw...!" Squirrelflight half sobbed. "I thought you were joining StarClan!"

"I'm glad you're alive," Brambleclaw mewed shakily, laying a tail reassuringly on his mate's shoulder. "We hoped for the best, and you're alive, thanks to StarClan."

"Twilightpaw needs to rest for now," Jaypaw entered the den. "You can see her tomorrow."

"Easy for you to say," Lionpaw muttered grumpily. "You'll get to see her all the time."

Jaypaw's eyes flashed with annoyance as he shooed his family out the den. Twilightpaw blinked at her littermate, who she had so clearly seen in the ancient times. He didn't have the knowing glint in his eyes to show that he knew of her times with the ancient cats. Only curiosity, worry, and fright.

"Did you have a vision?" He asked. Twilightpaw shook her head hesitantly. It wasn't a vision. It was just seeing the past. She

suddenly wondered where the place with the ancient cats were.

"Did StarClan visit you?" He prompted again. Twilightpaw shook her head truthfully.

"Then did you see *anything?"* This time Twilightpaw paused. Should she tell her littermate the truth, or say that it was just a sort of shock attack? After a moment, she shook he head.

"I know you're lying," Jaypaw snapped. "Why don't you tell me what you saw? Is it because I'm *blind?* Or is it because you don't trust me?"

Twilightpaw shook her head.

"Because I want to protect you. You are not ready."

Chapter 44

"You don't seem to have any fever," Leafpool mewed as she sniffed Twilightpaw's head. "I think you'll be alright after a day."

A day? That was way too much time for Twilightpaw, but she still miserably nodded her head.

"It's for your own good," Jaypaw snorted. "*You're not ready yet.*"

Twilightpaw ignored the gray tabby. He had been pestering her all day, trying to pry some information out of her tightly sealed mouth.

It was lucky she normally didn't talk very much.

If she was like Berrypaw, she would have probably died and spat the truth out. The cream-colored apprentice was always bragging at how great he was, and talked every moment he could.

"Jaypaw, stop annoying Twilightpaw and get on with stripping these elder leaves," Leafpool had scolded many times, but Jaypaw never listened and went on asking Twilightpaw questions that were far too close to the truth while stripping the dried elder leaves.

"Jaypaw! If you can't do better than tiring out your patient, go outside and gather some herbs in the forest," Leafpool snapped. Jaypaw glared at her, and whisked out the den.

Twilightpaw closed her eyes, relieved to finally rest. She fell into a deep sleep, tired after all the shock.

"You are here at last." Twilightpaw sat up and looked around, trying to see who had spoken. She was not in StarClan, but in the large cave where she had seen Fallen Leaves. A cat emerged from the shadows, and Twilightpaw stared at his furless body, bulging white eyes, and listened to his ragged breathing.

"I am Rock," The ancient cat rasped. "I walk these tunnels to protect the spirits that have not made it to the stars. You have come to seek answers of the past."

Twilightpaw looked into Rock's clouded eyes silently, waiting for an answer. He must have been alive when Twilight Sky was born.

"I was long dead even when the ancient cats roamed the territories," Rock meowed. "I guarded the tunnels even then. I am cursed to live like this, unable to break free."

"Walk with the past, and see where it takes you," He continued. "You will know where to find answers about the Three."

Before Twilightpaw could reply, Rock faded away and she woke up with a start.

Chapter 45

"Are you alright?" Leafpool asked after she, Twilightpaw, and Jaypaw said goodbye to the other medicine cats. "You look a bit shaken."

Twilightpaw shrugged, knowing that Leafpool would not understand why meeting Rock was important. Jaypaw glared at her, his jay-feather blue eyes sharp and intense. Twilightpaw suddenly wondered whether he could read her mind.

It could be his power, she guessed. *Or maybe he just senses my lie. He's pretty good at sensing our emotions, after all.*

"Twilightpaw!" Jaypaw hissed as Leafpool entered the medicine den. Twilightpaw turned around, her tired paws longing to rest for the night. Jaypaw beckoned with his tail to follow him, and she padded after him. They stopped just bellow Highrocks.

"I know you're lying to Leafpool," He whispered, glancing up at the den where Firestar was sleeping. "I know you met a weird old cat in a dark place. Why won't you tell me what happened?"

Twilightpaw shook her head.

"That is not an answer," Jaypaw snorted. "Who was that cat?"

I met a lot of cats these past few sunrises, Twilightpaw thought wryly. *And all of them are dead.*

"No," She replied simply. "You will know."

Very very soon, She thought privately. *I have a feeling that Rock will visit you.*

"Then what is the 'seek answers of the past'?" Jaypaw asked. Twilightpaw stiffened. She didn't know that he could hear her dream.

"Prophecy," She whispered, the words coming out of her mouth without her remembering hearing the explanation. Jaypaw leaned back, surprised at her low, rhythmic mew. "There will be Three, kin of the cat with flames in his pelt, and only twilight can protect them. The oldest prophecy ever made, find the answers in...the..."

She broke off, gasping for air.

"The where?" Jaypaw demanded. "In the where?"

Twilightpaw blinked, confused. She shrugged.

"Come on!" He snapped. "You basically told me everything! And how do you know about the Three?"

The calico she-cat pricked her ears. He *knew* about the prophecy?

"You are Three," She mewed. "You, Lionpaw, Hollypaw. I guide you. I protect you."

Twilightpaw suddenly felt exhausted after trekking all the way to the Moonpool and talking a lot more than usual. She turned away from Jaypaw and slipped inside the medicine den. She curled up in her warm nest and fell into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter 46

I need to find Fallen Leaves, Twilightpaw thought as she laid some soaked chervil leaves out in the sun for them to dry. I need to get back to the tunnels. *I need to find out more about the Three.*

She finished laying out the herb and padded to the dirt-place. The she-cat squeezed through the opening in the back and shook out her fur once she was out.

I'll need to wash for a moon to get this stink out of my fur! She thought, wrinkling her nose.

Twilightpaw followed the path she had used coming back to camp from the forest, looking out for the small rabbit hole that led to the cave.

Here! She spotted the entrance. The calico apprentice padded carefully inside, the stone walls of the tunnel brushing against her fur. She finally found the large cave with the underground river, and shivered as the damp cold of the cave swept over her.

"Twilight Sky, is that you?" A familiar voice called. She turned. Fallen Leaves' orange-splotched pelt glowed in the darkness as he stepped out of the shadows. Twilightpaw shivered as she noticed how pale and airy he looked.

I have walked these tunnels ever since I have died in them. His words echoed through her mind.

"What are you looking for?" He asked, green eyes shining with excitement at seeing another cat after being alone after so many seasons.

"Rock." She answered carefully. The ancient tom's face fell.

"Well, he guards these tunnels," Fallen Leaves turned away. "He

should be somewhere here. I will lead you to him."

Twilightpaw dipped her head and followed him up a rockfall. She sprang up the rocks and trotted after Fallen Leaves as he leapt gracefully past a large gap between the crumbled stone. The gap was at least two fox-lengths wide. Fallen Leaves looked back.

"Run and jump as close to the edge as possible," He called. "It's quite simple."

Twilightpaw took a deep breath and walked backwards three fox-lengths, then ran as fast as she could. She sprang into the air in a wide arch, her long legs stretch out as far as she could. Twilightpaw landed on the other side lightly, heart thumping.

"Great job," Fallen Leaves praised. "If you follow the rock paths, you will find Rock there."

Twilightpaw dipped her head thankfully at the other cat. His cold pelt brushed against her side as he jumped over the edge and faded away.

Chapter 47

Twilightpaw padded onwards, stumbling as her foot hit a small rock.

How long do I have to walk to get there? She wondered. She finally saw the trail coming to an end.

There! She saw a long, thick object lying in the shadows. *The stick!*

Twilightpaw ran over to the smooth object, it's surface marked with claw-marks. She sniffed at it, wondering how it came all the way down here.

"I see you have come again." She turned around, startled, to see Rock staring at her with blind, bulging eyes.

Twilightpaw dipped her head hesitantly. "The prophecy."

"Ah," He grunted, shifting his weight as he laid down. "You'll know when the time is right. You travel to the time when ancient cats roamed, and they will lead you to your destiny."

The calico apprentice nodded. To find out more about the prophecy, she needed to continue trekking her other life, seeking for answers. She glanced down at the stick, wondering again what the uncrossed scratches meant. Twilightpaw set her paws down onto its smooth surface, and she closed her eyes, knowing what to expect.

"Hey! Twilight Sky!" She opened her eyes as she heard her ancient name. Dove's Wing stood in front of her, blue eyes sparkling with mischief. "Do you want to help me put some fire ants in Jay's Wing's nest? I want to get revenge after he tricked me into eating mouse dung! Gray Storm is already outside!"

Twilightpaw nodded, aware that her body was smaller and lighter

than the other kit's.

"Let's go!" The gray kit squealed, running out the nursery. Twilightpaw cautiously stepped outside, suddenly realizing that it was her first time out of the warm den.

"Good to see you out, Twilight Sky!" A she-cat with an orange-and-white pelt and dark green eyes let out a purr. Twilightpaw was painfully reminded of Fallen Leaves. "You probably don't remember, but I helped Rising Moon when she kitted you and your littermates."

Broken Shadow, she remembered.

"First day out?" A dark brown tom asked, his yellow eyes amused and kind. Twilightpaw nodded.

"Come on, Twilight Sky!" Dove's Wing led her over to the outer parts of the clearing. Gray Storm was there, pouncing on a fiery red ant. His gray-and-white fur was fluffed out in concentration, blue eyes narrowed.

"Caught one!" He yowled, holding up a claw. A fire ant crawled over his tiny thorn-sharp claw. Gray Storm guided the ant carefully onto a small wad of moss.

"Here's another!" Dove's Wing squealed shaking another ant onto the moss. Twilightpaw glanced around, spotting the fire-ant nest where a few ants scurried around. She gently scooped one up and placed her paw on the moss. They continued to hunt the fire ants, going deeper into the bushes.

"This place smells bad," Gray Storm wrinkled his nose. "All bitter and stinky."

Twilightpaw realized that they were out of the camp. She parted her jaws, tasting the air, and stiffened.

Fox!

Chapter 48

Twilightpaw closed her eyes. *It's fresh. The fox is near.*

"Fox!" Just as she was about to warn the others, Dove's Wing let out a wail. A huge fox with dark red fur and a large swishy tail burst out of the woods. It let out a snarl, and leaped at them. Twilightpaw stumbled back as it crashed into her side.

"Twilight Sky!" Gray Storm yowled. He ran up to the fox and slashed his small claws across its hind leg. It whipped around and bit him hard on the tail. Gray Storm let out a dreadful screech.

"No!" Twilightpaw lunged at the fox's back, claws out. She slashed her claws viciously, digging in her teeth into its ear. The fox let out a shriek, but clawed Gray Storm on the side. Red blood oozed from the wound. The kit went limp, his side heaving with effort.

"Help!" Dove's Wing wailed, her voice rising to a yowl. "Someone, please come!" The oldest kit then pounced on the fox and bit its tail, hard, and tugged. The fox shook its body, throwing Twilightpaw straight at a tree. She let out a gasp as the rough bark slammed into her back.

The fox turned back to Gray Storm, and bit him behind the neck. He let out a yowl, and fell still.

"Gray Storm!" Dove's Wing cried. She growled, and scratched the fox on the snout. Twilightpaw scrambled to her paws, her entire body feeling bruised and battered. She slid under the fox and slashed all her claws at its underbelly.

"Dove's Wing! Twilight Sky! Gray Storm!" Five cats burst out of the bushes and lunged into battle. They scratched, bit, yowled, and nipped, until the fox finally stumbled to the ground and laid still.

"Gray Storm! No!" A screech came from the group of cats. Chasing Clouds crouched besides his kit's limp gray body, his blood staining

his white paws red.

No. No, no, no, no, Twilightpaw felt her stomach twist with agony. *No...he can't be dead. He can't!*

"Gray Storm!" Rising Moon wailed. "No! My precious kit! Don't leave me! Please!"

But Gray Storm was already dead.

Chapter 49

Twilightpaw felt Leaf Patch press hard against her as the dark brown tom, Running Horse, gently picked Gray Storm's small, limp body up and set him down into the little hole dug in the soft dirt ground. Half Moon was on Twilightpaw's other side, her green eyes wide with fear.

Rising Moon trembled next to her, her gray tail curling protectively around her three surviving kits. Chasing Clouds sat next to Leaf Patch, sadness and guilt clouding his bright blue gaze. Half Moon let out a pitiful wail as her brother dropped out of view into the dirt.

"Gray Storm was a kind, thoughtful kit who cared for his littermates," Rising Moon croaked. "I wish I could have saved him."

"Me, too," Half Moon whispered, shoving her nose into Twilightpaw's shoulder. "I'm glad you survived."

"I miss him already," Leaf Patch whimpered. "I wish I didn't call him a mouse-brain that last time we ate fresh-kill together. But I didn't know he would..."

Twilightpaw felt herself trembling, knowing that she wouldn't ever see her ancient brother ever again. She didn't think these cats went to StarClan when they died.

"It'll be alright," Chasing Clouds soothed, though his husky mew gave him away. "We'll just need to remember him, and he'll live in our hearts."

I don't want to think about what would happen if Lionpaw or Jaypaw died. Twilightpaw shivered at the thought of never seeing her other brothers again, without stars glittering in their pelts.

"You've had a lot of shock today, Twilight Sky," Chasing Clouds murmured. "I'll ask Cloudy Sun to check you over."

Broken Shadow walked over to them, her white-tipped tail trailing on the ground.

"Cloudy Sun is helping Dove's Wing stop stressing out," She mewed. "She's certain that she's the reason to Gray Storm's death. Come on, Fallen Leaves will treat you."

Chapter 50

Fallen Leaves! Twilightpaw stiffened. She spotted the orange-and-white tom, who had a bundle of thyme and tansy. He looked younger than when she saw him in the cave.

I'm not sick. I don't need tansy. She wrinkled her nose at the herbs. Tansy was used to treat Whitecough, not bruises and scratches.

"Come here, these'll make you feel better," Fallen Leaves explained, his green eyes not betraying that he already knew her.

Or maybe he doesn't know, Twilightpaw thought, knowing that the Fallen Leaves in the tunnels were long dead.

"Eat these," Fallen Leaves ordered. "I'll treat your scratches with tansy."

He nudged the thyme in front of her, and the calico kit licked it up obediently as he chewed up the tansy. He smeared the pulp onto her wounds, and she winced as the healing juice seeped inside.

"Did I do alright?" Fallen Leaves asked Broken Shadow anxiously.

"You were perfect," The she-cat purred. "Not bad for a softpaw."

"Soon I'll be a sharpclaw!" He declared.

"Of course," Broken Shadow agreed, but Twilightpaw saw worry in her light gaze. "It's hard to know that my kit will be an experienced sharpclaw soon."

"At least your kit will become a sharpclaw," Rising Moon meowed bitterly. "Today, my kit died before becoming a softpaw."

"Rising Moon, eat these," A ginger tabby tom held up a paw, where a few poppyseeds stuck to his pad. "You need to rest."

"I don't want rest, Cloudy Sun!" Rising Moon growled. "I want to see Gray Storm again."

"Oh, Rising Moon," He murmured. "We both know that you will never see him again."

Twilightpaw felt sleep crashing over her, and she stumbled over to Gray Storm's grave, where he was already covered by soft sand. She curled up besides it, and closed her eyes, wishing again and again that they hadn't went to find fire ants to put in Jay's Wing's nest.

Chapter 51

"I see you have waken up." Twilightpaw woke up with a start as she heard a familiar raspy mew. Rock stood besides her, pale white eyes knowing and somewhat sympathetic.

My ancient littermate died, She thought wretchedly. *And it's partly my fault.*

"It was Gray Storm's destiny," Rock croaked, his hairless body shifting until he was lying down. "And your destiny is up there, where the Three live."

I need to get out of here. Leafpool must be worried. Twilightpaw dipped her head in farewell, and padded back, the crossing over the gap smooth and uneventful. She slipped past the rabbit hole, and emerged in ThunderClan territory.

Leafpool and Jaypaw will be suspicious if I don't bring something back, Twilightpaw thought. I'll hunt here.

Leafpool had trained her to hunt when Jaypaw had been asleep, afraid that he would grow jealous that he would never learn. Twilightpaw was a terrible fighter, but Leafpool had said that she would be a formidable hunter if she continued hunting.

I smell rabbit, Twilightpaw stiffened. *That's a rare catch to bring the clan! Some warriors will go to sleep with their bellies full if I catch it.*

Sure enough, a young and plump rabbit with sleek white fur hopped out of a near juniper bush. Its leaves had begun to fall, and the berries long since withered. A rabbit was hard to find on ThunderClan territory, and finding one so fat was almost impossible, let alone during early leaf-bare.

Twilightpaw dropped into a hunter's crouch, scanning the distance between her and the rabbit. It was a couple tail-lengths away, oblivious to the fact that someone was hunting it. It was now

nibbling on a juniper seed.

Twilightpaw sneaked over to a nearby tree, her pawsteps quick and silent. She was almost a mouse-length away from the rabbit.

It's mine now! She thought, a spark of happiness returning to her at the thought of feeding her clan. The young she-cat tensed, and pounced, her claws unsheathed.

The rabbit squealed, its hind legs kicking wildly. Twilightpaw quickly silenced it with a swift nip to the neck.

Just like how the fox killed Gray Storm, she remembered with a shiver. Twilightpaw picked the rabbit up, stumbling at its weight. The rabbit was almost as big as her.

Forget the past, Twilightpaw thought, pushing aside the terrible memory. *Forget the past.*

Think of the future.

Chapter 52

Twilightpaw dragged the rabbit towards the camp entrance, its size and weight slowing her down. Its blood tasted salty and delicious on her tongue.

"Wow, great catch!" Hazelpaw exclaimed as she bounded out of the camp.

"Nice rabbit," Dustpelt, her mentor, sniffed at Twilightpaw's catch. "That'll feed the elders and queens. I think Mousefur will enjoy it very much."

"Did you catch that?" Whitewing asked, who was guarding the camp entrance. Twilightpaw nodded, the fresh-kill still in her mouth. "That's fantastic! You should be a warrior."

Twilightpaw dipped her head at the warrior and slipped through the camp entrance.

Leafpool barged right into her.

"Twilightpaw! There you are! Where were you?" She scolded, not noticing the rabbit in her jaws.

"Hunting." Twilightpaw replied, setting her catch down in front of her.

"You caught that?" Leafpool's eyes glowed as she purred. "That's quite a catch for one so small."

"I smell rabbit," Jaypaw padded up to her, and he bent down, his whiskers twitching as he felt how big it was. "It's big."

"Twilightpaw caught it," Leafpool explained. "It's very plump."

Twilightpaw picked the rabbit back up and padded towards the nursery. She slipped inside, and saw Foxkit and Icekit pouncing on Ferncloud's tail.

"Leave your mother alone," Daisy scolded. "You'll claw her tail off."

"Hi, Twilightpaw!" Icekit squeaked. "Is that for us? Did Dustpelt catch it?"

Twilightpaw set the rabbit down and split it in half.

"Share it with Ferncloud and Daisy," She murmured before picking the remaining pieces up and padding out the den.

"Thanks, Twilightpaw!" Daisy called. Twilightpaw entered the elder's den, where Mousefur was snoring softly.

"Hi," Longtail tasted the air. "Did you bring fresh-kill?"

Twilightpaw nodded, before remembering that the tom was blind. "Yes."

"It smells delicious," He continued. "Who caught such rabbit in the beginning of leaf-bare?"

"I did," Twilightpaw answered, pushing two rabbit legs in front of him.

"You did?" Longtail's fur prickled with surprise. "Well. Mousefur, Twilightpaw caught us this delicious rabbit."

Twilightpaw dipped her head and padded out the den, proud at last that she could do something right.

Chapter 53

"I heard you caught a huge rabbit today," Hollypaw mewed between bites of a sparrow's wing. "I bet it fed all the elders and queens!"

"It did," Cinderpaw purred, chewing on a small finch she was sharing with Jaypaw. "And there was some left over from the elders. It was really fat!"

"Wow," Lionpaw blinked, and took a bite out of his scrawny vole. He wrinkled his nose. "Foxkit and Icekit are lucky. This thing tastes stringy."

Twilightpaw pushed her tiny, yet tasty sparrow towards him and took his vole. She took a bite. He was right; it was stringy.

Since it was the start of leaf-bare, a lot of the prey was thin and tasteless.

"You couldn't have possibly spent the entire day trying to catch that one rabbit," Jaypaw grunted. "What were you doing?"

"Hunting." Twilightpaw shrugged.

"Hunting for the entire day, and catching one rabbit?" Jaypaw snorted. "Don't think so. And what are those new scratches?"

"At least it was a big rabbit!" Hollypaw mewed, shoving him in the side. "Don't be such a grumpy furball!"

Twilightpaw finished the vole in a few quick bites, dipped her head to the others, and padded to the medicine den. Jaypaw got up and stalked briskly after her.

"I know you're lying again," He hissed. "Why aren't you telling the truth?"

Twilightpaw shrugged, curling up in her nest. Jaypaw scooted closer towards her.

"You can tell *me*," His offer was drowned out by the black wave of tiredness that hit Twilightpaw like a storm.

She closed her eyes and ignored her littermate's exasperation, and fell asleep.

Something sharp prodded her in the side. The calico she-cat opened her eyes, slightly frustrated. She wasn't one to get sad, happy, or frustrated very easily, but Jaypaw was being annoying.

Twilightpaw looked up to find Yellowfang looking straight into her eyes. She stood up with a start.

I'm in StarClan hunting grounds. She stared at the gray she-cat in front of her.

"You'll find your answers about the Three in the mountains," Yellowfang rumbled, her squashed muzzle glowing from her yellow eyes. "Go up the mountains, and speak to the past."

Twilightpaw blinked, but before she could ask more about the strange order, the StarClan cat faded away, leaving nothing but stars behind.

Chapter 54

"Twilight Sky, wake up!" Twilightpaw opened her eyes wide, and found herself staring into a young black-and-white tom's amber eyes. She was still besides Gray Storm's grave.

"There you are!" Rising Moon's hollow blue gaze didn't match her mildly worried mew. Chasing Clouds hurried towards his mate, guiding her and Twilightpaw towards the nursery.

"Thanks for waking her up, Jagged Lightning. You did well," He called to the softpaw. Jagged Lightning nodded, his fur fluffed up happily at the praise.

"Is she sneezing or coughing?" A light brown she-cat with blue eyes asked hurriedly. Her mew was soft and sweet, but Twilightpaw felt her 'mother' bristle with impatience. "Perhaps she's caught a cold. Does she need any coltsfoot?"

"Soaring Hawk, she'll be fine. She's just a bit chilly from spending the night outside." Rising Moon mewed off-handedly. Twilightpaw knew that she was thinking of her dead kit.

"Well, in that case, you better ask Bird Song," Soaring Hawk suggested. "She knows more than me about herbs and coughs."

"You'll always know the most, Soaring Hawk," A tom with dark orange fur like Squirrelflight's and light green eyes assured kindly.

"Thank you, Flaming Branch," Soaring Hawk let out a purr. "But I'm getting old, and I won't live forever!"

"You'll be having me hunt for you soon!" Flaming Branch joked. "I'll always bring you the fattest squirrel I can find!"

"Wouldn't that be something?" Twilightpaw suddenly noticed the gray hairs speckling the she-cat's muzzle. "My clumsy younger brother hunting down a squirrel that's going to be twice his size."

"Hey! Flaming Branch isn't clumsy!" A younger she-cat glared at the old cat. "He's going to be the best sharpclaw in the entire forest!"

"I have a long way to go to be the best sharpclaw," Flaming Branch purred. "But thanks for the encouragement, Shy Fawn."

He glanced shyly at the sand-colored she-cat. "You are certainly the best hunter, though."

Twilightpaw quickly walked out the nursery as Shy Fawn let out an amused purr. *There'll be more kits in the nursery soon!*

She padded up to Half Moon, who was staring into a small puddle, her dark green eyes reflected on the clear surface.

"Why did Gray Storm die?" She asked, her white tail swishing in an agitated arch. Twilightpaw shrugged.

"Why did the fox pick on him? Why was it even on our territory? Why were you even out of the nursery? Why was his blood spilt all over my paws, when I was unable to help heal him?" The pale she-cat's questions spilled out like an overflowing river.

"Why did you have that seizure? Why is Leaf Patch so distant and snappy? Why does Rising Moon burry herself in grief instead of caring for us?"

The questions became so overwhelming, that when Twilightpaw tried to fill her mind and search for an answer, her eyes rolled up, her limbs started twitching, and everything went dark as she slumped over on her side.

Chapter 55

"Twilightpaw!" Leafpool's frantic mew startled her awake. Twilightpaw was in her nest in the medicine den, with Jaypaw and Leafpool looking worriedly at her.

"Why do these things keep happening?" The apprentice's mentor let out a sigh as she felt Twilighpaw's side for fever. "These seizures...they're not natural."

"She seems fine," Jaypaw sniffed her head. "No fever, choking, coughing or wheezing. I think they just happen when she...sees something."

Twilightpaw stiffened. Did her snoopy littermate find out about her secret?

"No visions, Twilightpaw?" Leafpool asked. She shook her head.

"Well, if you're sure you're fine, I guess you can wrap this honey Berrynose has kindly retrieved for us."

Twilightpaw nodded, shaking out her pelt so that the moss that clung to her fur fell to the ground, and nosed through the cracks to find some laurel leaves. She emerged from the herb store holding a laurel and beech leaf, with a strip of bark.

Twilightpaw wrapped the piece of honey in the large leaves, but her mind was on what Yellowfang had told her before she had waken in the ancient world.

You will find your answers in the mountains.

She nudged the leaf parcel towards Leafpool. Twilightpaw had decided on what to do.

I'll sneak out of camp and meet the Tribe of Rushing Water at dusk!

Twilightpaw listened to Leafpool's gentle snores and Jaypaw's whispered murmurs. She rummaged quietly through her moss to find the leaf wrap of traveling herbs that she had made earlier on. She quickly licked the sorrel, daisy, chamomile, and burnet.

It was dusk, and most of the warriors had gone to sleep. Whitewing and Dustpelt were guarding the entrance.

Looks like I'll sneak out through the dirtplace, The calico she-cat wrinkled her nose at the thought. She crept out the medicine den, pausing at the base of Highledge. She pricked her ears to hear what Whitewing and Dustpelt were doing; nothing. They were gazing out of camp, snapping their heads to the direction of any branch cracking and leaf falling.

Twilightpaw scooted into the shadows, and padded silently over to the dirtplace tunnel. She slipped inside, holding her breath, and squeezed through the opening that led to the forest. She rolled in a patch of dead leaves, their musky scent drowning out the odor of the dirtplace and her ThunderClan smell.

I'm on the way, Twilightpaw promised, gazing at the moon that shone brightly in the star-speckled night as the sun slowly slipped out of the sky.

I'm coming to the mountains, Twilight Sky.

Chapter 56

Twilightpaw had walked for quite a while, and she still remembered the prickle of her pelt as she stepped out of ThunderClan territory and onto WindClan's land. She knew that the warriors couldn't harm her, because medicine cats could pass onto anyone's territory, but the thought of leaving clan territory had scared her.

Now Twilightpaw was over the WindClan border and in the fenced area of the horseplace. The sun was rising; ThunderClan was bout to know about her disappearance.

She quickened her pace, racing through the long grass where horses ran. They were all in their dens, but it couldn't be long before the huge animals barged onto their land. Twilightpaw squeezed under the fence and out to the land where only the cats that journeyed to the sun-drown-place had stepped.

I'm out of clan territory for real now, The calico apprentice realized as she padded through the unfamiliar forest. The traveling herb's effects had started to wear off, and Twilightpaw's paws were aching from walking for so long. Her stomach growled with hunger.

I'll hunt now, She decided. *I'll manage some fresh-kill. I'd better watch out for foxes and badgers, though!*

The apprentice winced as she remembered Gray Storm's death. She pushed the tragic memory away and tasted the air. She scented a mouse, and instantly dropped to a crouch. Twilightpaw spotted the plump rodent a few fox-lengths away. She crept up slowly, lifting her tail slightly so it didn't sweep the ground.

The mouse was only a couple of pawsteps away. Twilightpaw tensed, prepared to jump, but before she pounced, a white blur burst out from behind a tree landed on the brown creature, biting it sharply on the neck to kill.

The she-cat blinked, standing back up. She saw a white tom with a black tail, who looked a few moons older than her. Twilightpaw noticed the black spots on his glossy pelt and around his bright blue eyes. His huge paws held the dead mouse.

"Oh, were you going to catch this?" He asked, picking the fresh-kill up with his jaws. Twilightpaw nodded, but turned away.

I can catch another, She thought. *Let him have it.*

Chapter 57

"You look barely older than a kit!" The tom continued, setting the mouse back down. "And you're so skinny! Do you catch your own prey all the time?"

Twilightpaw looked back at him, then shook her head.

"Sometimes?" He asked. She nodded.

"Well, there's a lot. We could share," The white cat offered. "You can have a bit of the mouse."

Twilightpaw shook her head. He had caught it, after all.

"Can you talk?" He tilted his head curiously. "Or are you one of those cats that can't talk? I had a friend like that."

"I can talk," Twilightpaw mewed. "I just don't."

"Well, there's more than I can eat, so I was thinking maybe you could help me finish?" The tom crouched in front of the mouse and slicing it neatly in half. The apprentice hesitated, before settling besides him and taking a bite of her share.

"What's your name?" He asked.

"Twilightpaw," She answered slowly. The white tom stiffened.

"That's a clan name." He meowed, and Twilightpaw jerked her head to face him.

"I heard of the clans from my mother. She had a...friend, who heard of the cats that live around the lake," He explained quickly. "So...what clan are you from?"

"ThunderClan." Twilightpaw eyed the older cat. "Your name?"

"You can call me Shade," The white-and-black cat mewed

cheerfully, as if he hadn't been so shocked, before gulping down his half of the mouse. "You don't have to answer, I know it's rude, but...what's wrong with your eyes?"

Twilightpaw shrugged.

"You were born with a green and blue eye?" Shade prompted. She nodded. "That's fascinating. I have a friend who was a kittypet. He had odd eyes as well. Thought his weren't as pretty as yours." He ducked his head shyly.

Twilightpaw chewed on her mouse, not knowing what to say. Was this cat *complimenting* her strange eyes? That was a first. She dipped her head in thanks.

"Anyways, I thought clan cats didn't go out of their territories," Shade continued. "Why are you here?"

Twilightpaw thought for a moment. "I am going to the mountains. But I don't know how to get there."

"Oh!" The other cat's blue eyes shone. "I know where that is! I can guide you there!"

Twilightpaw looked gratefully at him. *A companion will be nice,* She thought. *I'll get there much faster with a cat that knows the way.*

I think this cat will be an important part of this journey.

Chapter 58

"Well, we'll need to stick together now," Shade mewed as he collected moss for his nest. Twilightpaw nodded, stifling a sneeze as she picked up her own bundle of moss and bracken. "This will be a nice place to sleep." He ran over to a hollowed spot in between the roots of a large oak tree. The black-tailed tom spread his moss over the space, and gestured to the empty soil besides it. "You can rest here. We can start our journey at dawn."

Twilightpaw dropped her soft bedding besides his nest and curled up inside the warm fronds. An owl hooted nearby, and the leaves rustled as Shade shuffled in his nest. He fell silent after a few moments, his soft breathing near her ear.

Twilightpaw closed her eyes, and let weary sleep crash into her.

"Twilight Sky! You're awake!" A familiar mew started her awake. Chasing clouds peered over her, and Half Moon pressed into his gray pelt. Leaf Patch and Rising Moon was nowhere to be seen. Soaring Hawk sniffed at Twilightpaw's pelt, her creamy golden pelt bristling with worry.

"These seizures cannot be stopped," The elder rasped. "They will happen soon after. Maybe a moon later, or when the sun is setting."

"Where's Leaf Patch and Rising Moon?" Falcon Swoop looked around the milky den. "Surely Rising Moon will want to see her kit alright? And Leaf Patch would be relieved to see her strong and healthy!"

"Rising Moon is grieving." Chasing Clouds stated shortly, though his blue eyes were clouded with pain and anger. "Leaf Patch needs time to recover. They will come back soon."

Just then, Rising Moon squeezed into the nursery.

"Twilight Sky had another seizure," Soaring Hawk reported, expecting the light gray and white she-cat to rush over to her kit.

"She did?" Rising Moon asked offhandedly, her eyes hollow and distant. "She'll be fine. She's not suffering."

"Oh- well- but I thought you'd want to know that your kit is safe," Soaring Hawk stammered, startled by her bluntness.

"My kit is not safe!" Rising Moon hissed. Twilightpaw winced at the anger in her narrowed gaze. "He is dead, and he was hardly a moon old!"

"Twilight Sky is your kit as well!" Chasing Clouds snapped. "You should care for your surviving kits, not mourn a kit that's gone, and you can't do anything about it!"

"You never cared for Gray Storm!" Rising Moon growled. "You never mourned him, you never missed him!"

"Do you think it was hard for me when he died, buried into the earth forever?" The tom narrowed his eyes. "I stayed strong for our kits, for you, and you don't care about Twilight Sky, Half Moon, or Leaf Patch!"

"Was all the pain worth it?" Rising Moon asked in despair. "To kit these kits, when one of them die before he becomes a softpaw? I think not!"

And with a whisk of her tail, the gray-and-white queen was gone.

Chapter 59

"Hey, Twilightpaw! Are you okay?" Twilightpaw blinked. Shade stood over her, his blue eyes bright with excitement. "Wake up! It's dawn!"

She yawned, stretching, before standing up and looking warily up at the older tom.

"We can hunt later," Shade suggested. "I know some spots where we can catch some mice on the way."

Twilightpaw nodded wearily before padding after him as the glossy white rogue headed through the ferns.

"Why are you going to the mountains anyways?" Shade asked. His eyes glowed mischievously. "Try some fresh mountain water?"

Twilightpaw shoved him in the side, though he barely moved. "A dream."

"Oh. Did the dream include hunting flying hedgehogs? Because climbing those mountains are impossible." Shade smirked. "I heard from my friends that there are a group of cats that eat small kits like you everyday!"

She ignored the fact that he had just called her a kit. "A prophecy from StarClan."

"What's StarClan?" Shade asked. "Some hidden clan of cats that are made of stars?"

"Our ancestors." Twilightpaw replied, amused at his silliness. "Cats from clans that have died. The stars in Silverpelt are their spirits."

"Silverpelt?" Shade tilted his head curiously.

"The group of stars in the night sky," Twilightpaw explained, swerving sharply to avoid a tree. Shade ducked to avoid a low

branch.

"I thought it was like a huge cat that collected the dead cat's spirits in its fur," Shade commented. Twilightpaw stifled a snort. "Clan cats have names like Silverpelt, so I got confused. Hey, how come you're so young, but you're a warrior?"

"I'm an apprentice," Twilightpaw flicked her ear. "Not a warrior. I will get my full name when I finish my training."

By now, they were out of the forest. A large barn, like the horseplace, emerged from the thinning trees, and Twilightpaw spotted huge animals that had pelts like clouds.

"So, apprentices have names that end with 'paw?" Shade pricked his ears in interest. "So what do you think your warrior name will be?"

"I am not going to be a warrior," Twilightpaw shook her head. "I'm training to be a medicine cat."

"The cats that heal the clan, right?" Shade checked. Twilightpaw nodded. "So what do you think your medicine cat name will be?"

She shrugged. *I hope it's not Twilightsky!*

"Ooh, I can think of some ideas for you," Shade thought for a moment. "What about Twilight...whisker? Twilightwhisker! Or Twilightfoot! Or Twilightstep! Maybe Twilightpelt!"

Twilightpaw's whiskers twitched in amusement.

"You could be Twilightshade," He offered. "In honor of me!"

Twilightpaw couldn't contain the disbelieving snort.

"Hey!" Shade glared playfully at her. "It's better than Twilighttwilight!"

Chapter 60

After a while of conversation, Twilightpaw and Shade were right in the midst of one of the fluffy white animals.

"These are sheep," Shade explained. "They aren't very violent, so we should be fine. Except sometimes the-"

A loud series of barking interrupted his sentence. The sheep let out alarmed bleats and charged ahead, separating Twilightpaw and Shade.

"-dogs!" Shade yowled. "Run! Those hooves really hurt!"

Twilightpaw raced through the middle of the herd, brushing past greasy white pelts and wincing as a sheep accidentally kicked her in the side. She fell, losing her balance, and rolled on her side. The dog was close now, barking eagerly at the fallen apprentice.

"Twilightpaw!" She heard as she gasped for breath. Shade was standing in the safety of a bramble thicket, but when he spotted Twilightpaw, he ran towards her.

"We'll need to run extra fast on this one," He whispered in her ear as he helped her up. "That dog sure is fast! When I say run, run.'"

Twilightpaw nodded, and took a deep breath.

"Run!" Shade screeched, before launching himself towards the brambles again. Twilightpaw leaped after him, her long legs eating up the distance. She ran past Shade and didn't stop to look back until they were out of the fenced area. She turned to see Shade scrambling to a halt a few tail-lengths away from her. The dog was nowhere to be seen.

"Wow, you're fast," He panted, catching his breath. "Not a lot of cats win me in a race."

"It was survival," Twilightpaw pointed out. "A life and death

situation."

"Well, same thing." She noticed him limping as he set off towards the Twolegplace. It was closer now that they had run all the way there.

Twilightpaw stopped him gently with her tail, and sniffed at his paw. She caught to scent of blood, and nudged it until Shade reluctantly lifted his paw to show her a thorn in his pad.

"Just a thorn I stepped on on the way here," He shrugged, wincing. Twilightpaw studied the thorn for a moment, then grabbed it with her teeth, and yanked it out of his paw.

"Ow!" Shade yelped, shaking his paw. A drop of blood fell to the grass. She looked around, spotting a clump of horsetail.

"Lick it clean," She told him, biting through the stems of the herb. When the black-and-white rogue did as she said, Twilightpaw chewed up the plant and rubbed it into his wound. He winced, but sighed in relief as the herb worked its healing juice into his paw.

"We can go now," Shade meowed, testing his paw on the ground. "I can barely feel it! Thanks for healing me!"

Twilightpaw swished her tail and padded on to the direction of the Twolegplace, feeling strangely pleased by his comment.

Chapter 61

"Let's hunt," Shade mewed as he leaped across a small stream. It had been a few days since the dog incident, and Twilightpaw and Shade had become close friends. "The last time we caught anything was at the barn."

Before going to the Twolegplace, they had taken a path that led to a place with more prey. Shade had explained that the path that led directly to the Twolegplace had no prey, now that all the rogues and loners had hunted until hardly a mousetail was left. They had left the barn at dawn, and by now the sun was high in the sky.

Twilightpaw hadn't had anymore dreams of the ancient times, and she was glad; all she needed now was Shade to see her have another seizure.

"I smell a blackbird," The white tom whispered, dropping into a hunter's crouch. Twilightpaw had learned to be an excellent hunter thanks to his careful teaching. "I'll scare it towards you."

Shade waited for Twilightpaw to sneak up to her position, then lunged at the startled brown bird. The blackbird let out a startled screech and flew straight at Twilightpaw's head. She jumped, and grabbed it with outstretched claws.

"Great catch!" Shade purred as she bit the bird sharply behind the neck. It fell limp.

"You helped," She pointed out, before settling down and waiting for the rogue to take a bite.

"After we finish our fresh-kill, we better hurry up to the forest besides the Twolegplace," Shade explained. "We can rest there, and we can get to the foot of the mountain at sunrise."

Twilightpaw nodded, and after they finished the blackbird with a few famished gulped, the two set off again.

When they reached the Twolegplace, the sun was starting to set.

"We should go slow in here," Shade frowned as a monster raced past them. "The Twolegplace can be dangerous."

They tensed besides the Thunderpath. "When I say run, run faster than you ever ran in your entire life."

Twilightpaw nodded, but just as she raced towards the other end of the Thunderpath when he yowled, "Run!", a monster rumbled straight towards her only a few fox-lengths away.

And that was when she fell in a heap of calico fur and the seizure started.

Chapter 62

"I wish these seizures would stop," Twilightpaw heard. She saw Cloudy Sun looking down at her, frowning. "I thought that after a moon of a normal life, they'd have stopped."

Twilightpaw noticed that her body was bigger than the last time she had lived with the ancients. A huge time period must have past, like Cloudy Sun had said.

"At least Twilight Sky always wakes up." Half Moon slid past the old sharpclaw and rested her green gaze on the calico she-cat. "I think we should start getting used to the seizures."

Twilightpaw noticed that this was a den different from the one she had been living in.

"Twilight Sky! Come on, we're going to hunt today." She saw Furled Bracken, a dark ginger tabby, slip in the den. His amber eyes darkened. "Another seizure?"

"I thought they ended, but I thought wrong," Cloudy Sun sighed. "It's as if something broke when Soaring Hawk died."

"Don't forget Falling Rain and Falcon Swoop," Jagged Lightning added as he stood up from his nest.

"And Flaming Branch was killed by the monster," Furled Bracken reminded. "It's as if this moon is going to be getting worse."

"Everything gets worse before getting better," Half Moon soothed. "Owl Feather is expecting, and Fallen Leaves will come out of the tunnels soon."

"Fallen Leaves..." Cloudy Sun bowed her head. "The rain has washed into the tunnels. He might not have survived."

Fallen Leaves! Twilightpaw thought with a sickened lurch. *He's dead...I don't know what happened to him, but he died in the tunnels.*

"We should focus on the happy things," Half Moon mewed firmly. "The prey will start coming out of their burrows, and there will be plenty to eat."

"The rain is not stopping," Cloudy Sun rasped. Twilightpaw noticed the specks of gray flecking her muzzle. "Perhaps they will drown before they reach the surface."

"We'll survive!" Half Moon cried. Her pale fur fluffed out in surprise. "How can you give up so easily? The rain will slow down soon. The storm is ending. We will go to sleep with our bellies no longer hollow today."

She whisked out of the den and out into the forest.

"Well, let's go hunting. Twilight Sky?" Furled Bracken glanced at her. The she-cat stood up and bounded after him as the tabby padded out of the den.

"Furled Bracken!" A wail erupted from the forest, and Dove's Wing burst out of the trees. "We've found- it's- she's dead!"

And Chasing Clouds thumped towards Furled Bracken, with a small, battered body of a cat with brown patches on white fur.

It was Leaf Patch.

Chapter 63

"No!" Twilightpaw heard, and she looked to find Half Moon standing by the entrance, holding a vole. She dropped her fresh-kill and rushed towards her father. "Leaf Patch!"

Twilightpaw raced towards them as Chasing Clouds set down his kit's dead body. She spotted scratches and bites that were clearly made by cats.

"Who...?" She murmured, examining her littermate's limp form. Twilightpaw stiffened as she touched Leaf Patch's leg. It was broken.

"She did it to herself," Chasing Clouds choked. "I found her clawing and biting herself, and when I tried to stop her, she climbed a tree and jumped down."

Twilightpaw put her paw on Leaf Patch's claws. Her own brown-and-white fur was stuck between them, bloodied red by her flesh.

"She never fully recovered Gray Storm's death." Rising Moon meowed sadly. "Leaf Patch couldn't live surviving in a place where foxes have killed her brother."

"We will burry her tonight." Stone Song gazed down at the dead body of the softpaw. "Leaf Patch was a great cat who was a terrific hunter, and we will miss her dearly."

Running Horse limped out of under a straggly bush and licked Leaf Patch's fur clean.

"Go rest if you need," Furled Bracken murmured in Twilightpaw's ear. "You've had enough grief to last your entire life."

Twilightpaw shook her head numbly, stumbling out into the forest. *I need to clear my mind.*

She raced through the trees and slowed down to a halt besides the

tunnels.

Why are you showing me this, Rock? This couldn't have been Twilight Sky's destiny. No cat can live with so much grief.

She changed the world to the ancient cats. She was declined by her mother, and two of her littermates have died. That has changed her life, and made her who she was.

Twilightpaw blinked, surprised to hear an answer. Just then, pawsteps echoed from inside the tunnels, and Twilightpaw pricked her ears. Rock walked out of the cave, his bulging white eyes calm yet tired.

"You should get back," He rasped. "The mountains lie ahead of you."

Chapter 64

Twilightpaw followed Rock as he padded into the tunnels, starlight swirling around her. She opened her eyes with a gasp, and found herself in the present world.

"Twilightpaw! You're awake!" Shade let out a breath of relief. "You were shaking and twitching right in the middle of the Thunderpath! You were lucky that the monster missed you by a whisker."

Twilightpaw blinked, the world around her blurry and unfocused. She finally got Shade's white pelt and black tail into focus, and started as she noticed a second, older, cat.

"That's Purdy," Shade explained, following her gaze. "He let us stay here for a while."

"Twilightpaw, eh?" Purdy's brown tabby pelt was matted and falling out, and Twilightpaw saw a few swollen ticks on his flank. "I met a bunch with names like that once. Bramblesomething and Squirrelpaw. I remember a bad-tempered young cat and some others. Can't remember very well."

This old cat had met her mother and father? Twilightpaw remembered Brambleclaw telling her about his adventure to the sun-drown-place with cats from each clan. He and Squirrelflight, Squirrelpaw then, had went for ThunderClan, though he was the only one chosen by StarClan.

"Squirrelpaw?" Shade glanced at Twilightpaw. "Must have been a clan cat. This Squirrelpaw cat must be a warrior by now. I wonder what their warrior name is."

"Squirrelflight," She said. "And Brambleclaw. My mother and father."

"Oh, I remember Brambleclaw alright." Purdy let out a grunt, scratching at a flea with one hind leg. "Where's he now? Found a

home at last?"

Twilightpaw nodded.

"They were young cats, barely older than you two," Purdy purred. "Kits! They were barely kits themselves! You the only one of the litter?"

She shook her head. "Four kits."

"Four! Well, I never." The old kittypet shook his head. "You need food. I'll get something for you."

"It's alright, Purdy," Shade meowed. "I can catch something for us."

"Prey's scarce here," Purdy growled. "Rogues and loners, the filthy creatures. Left me nothin' to eat."

Shade stiffened, and Twilightpaw laid her tail on his back.

"Not you," Purdy added quickly, noticing the white tom's reaction. "Some other cats scared all the prey away. Must've been some lost kittypet."

"Well, we'll stay here for a while," Shade mewed, his voice cold as stone. "My friends might have stayed here while going to find some other cats."

"Oh." Purdy shuffled down onto the ground. "Tell 'em to stop taking everything, then. Now help yourselves to the forest."

Twilightpaw shook out her pelt and padded into the trees, ignoring Shade's bristling pelt as he brushed closer to her.

Chapter 65

Twilightpaw lunged forward, swiping the sparrow with her claws unsheathed. It let out a shrill chirp of alarm before going silent. She sniffed at it with disappointment, noticing how scrawny it was. Twilightpaw carried it towards Purdy.

"Nice catch." He grunted. Twilightpaw nudged it closer to him, and the old cat sniffed at the fresh-kill. "Nah. This's yours. I can catch my own."

"Hey! I thought we-" She turned to see Shade lugging a huge crow behind him. His eyes were narrowed at Purdy as he saw Twilightpaw crouched besides him, silently urging him to eat. She stood up, glancing back at Purdy to make sure he was eating.

"I thought maybe we could share this, but it looks like you already have company." Shade's tail drooped sadly, though his cold blue eyes were looking sharply at Purdy, who, at last, was taking a bite of Twilightpaw's sparrow. She padded to his side laying her tail comfortingly on his back, then sniffed at the crow.

"It's big," She purred. "Great job."

"Thanks." Shade settled down and took a big bite, then gestured for her to sit down and eat. Twilightpaw laid down and followed his lead.

"I thought that maybe you wouldn't need my company," He flicked his ear back. "It's okay if you'd like to hang around with Purdy. He's a nice cat, and he needs company. You see, his twoleg died and now he's left alone. Of course, the other twolegs take care of him."

Twilightpaw pushed her nose into his shoulder for a moment, then mewed, "The mountains. You aren't coming with me."

"Why?" Shade asked. "You can't stop me from. I'm coming with you."

Twilightpaw shook her head. "Too dangerous."

"Nothing is dangerous for me," He insisted. "And if it is, it's better to have two cats than one."

She stood firm to her decision. "The Tribe of Endless Hunting. It wants me. You won't be welcome."

"Maybe it wants us to be together," Shade argued. "Maybe they destined us to be together."

"The Tribe of Endless Hunting isn't StarClan," Twilightpaw mewed wistfully. "StarClan guides me. The Tribe of Endless Hunting guides the Tribe of Rushing Water."

"Do you always have to follow what StarClan says?" Shade asked. "Do you have to obey a few dead cats in what's *your* decision? This is your life, not theirs.

"They can't stop you from making decisions on things you want."

Chapter 66

Twilightpaw was horrified, yet drawn by Shade's declaration. *He's right. StarClan can't force me to do anything, and they can't force me to not do anything. They guide us, yes, but they have no power over our choices, whether they're right or wrong.*

But they're our ancestors. One day, I *will go to StarClan. And my littermates are the Three. The prophecy...it was made by StarClan, wasn't it? And without StarClan, the four clans will not be clans. The warrior code won't exist.*

And StarClan is powerful, more powerful than you can imagine, Shade. They see the future. They guide us, and they protect us from harm.

It's just our decision to follow what they say or not.

"StarClan guides the clans," Twilightpaw began hesitantly. "They protect us. They steer us away from trouble."

"Yet they don't stop it," Shade entered smoothly. "They only warn you with cryptic prophecies and visions you don't understand. They forbid cats that wish for a mate and kits to have any one of them, and force their path on loneliness when they have to help a mother with her kits and a father worried about his mate's health."

"Yes," Twilightpaw raised her head. "But it was our choice to do so. We have made an oath. We agreed to do as they said."

"But do you have to?" Shade asked. His frosty blue eyes were filled with determination and despair. "Do you want a life that's tied to your dead ancestors? A life where cats forbid you to mate whoever you want? Don't you want to know, Twilightpaw, how that rule ruined my life, and will ruin my life?"

Twilightpaw stiffened. What did he mean?

"My mother's life was ruined because of my father. He left us

because he said that StarClan couldn't possibly allow it. StarClan ruined any chance of a happy life we could have had. And now? You are my best friend, Twilightpaw, and perhaps more. But StarClan won't want that, won't they? Stay with me. We'll be happy together. I know it."

The black-and-white cat sighed, his head bowed low. Twilightpaw licked him comfortingly behind the ears. She felt like her heart was torn into pieces.

"Shade," She began. "I'd love to stay.

"But my littermates need me."

Chapter 67

Shade reluctantly agreed to let Twilightpaw go to meet the Tribe of Rushing Water alone.

"But if anything happens to you, I'll never forgive myself," He warned. "Stay safe."

Twilightpaw looked up at the stone walls and ground, covered in snow when it was still leaf-fall. They'd arrived at the foot of the mountain, and Shade had come to say his farewells.

"Bye," He mewed. "I hope we meet again someday."

Twilightpaw nodded stiffly. She was surprised to find that she'd miss him greatly when she goes back to the clans. She wanted him to go with her to visit the Tribe.

But it's too dangerous, Twilightpaw reminded herself. She was startled when Shade brushed against her pelt and buried his nose into her shoulder.

"I'll miss you," He whispered. "I don't want to be alone all over again. I have friends, but I don't think they enjoy my company very much. They're frightened of me. Afraid of what I'll do to them."

Twilightpaw blinked. "Afraid?"

"I- they aren't exactly my friends," Shade sighed. "More like they follow me. They want to help me get revenge for my mother. My father...he left us when she was sick. If he'd helped us fetch herbs and hunt for us, she might have survived. But he left because his- his family was going away to a place with rich prey."

Twilightpaw remained silent. What if Squirrelflight had been ill when she, Jaypaw, Lionpaw, and Hollypaw had been kits, and Brambleclaw had left them all alone? She shuddered when she imagined a world where everyone was afraid of her, no one

wanting to talk to her. Or daring to.

"I'll see you soon," She murmured instead. "Stay safe."

"You, too." Shade threw one last worried look at her before turning away and running into the forest.

Oh, Shade, Twilightpaw thought. *Your father was a cruel, ignorant cat when he abandoned you and your dying mother.*

But that doesn't mean you need to get revenge just because he loved his family so much.

Chapter 68

Twilightpaw paused to lick her tired pads. She had started to trek the long path that led to the Tribe Squirrelflight had talked about so fondly about.

I wonder if they'll welcome me, She thought. *Squirrelflight said that they were very cautious.*

What if I came for nothing? What if they turn me away because I'm not from around here? What if they don't want me here?

Twilightpaw looked up as she heard a screech. A large bird with wings bigger than her swooped down straight at her, cruel talons gleaming in the white snow. Twilightpaw ran a moment too late; its claws dug into her fur and she let out a slight gasp of pain as she felt them pierce her side. Blood trickled down onto rocky snow-covered ground, and the eagle flew up.

The calico she-cat flailed her legs helplessly in the air. She was already a tail-length away from the ground, and the eagle's sharp claws were dug in firmly into her body. She fell limp as more blood gushed out of the wounds.

"Let her go!" A sudden yowl sounded, but Twilightpaw was too weak to look. Her eyes were already closing as black crowded her sight. Unexpectedly, the eagle let out a sharp shriek and Twilightpaw felt its talons loosen its grip. The huge bird lurched, and she fell to the ground with a *thump*.

"Come on, Night! Help me see whether she's alright." An unfamiliar tom's voice echoed through her head. She felt him sniffing at her pelt and wounds.

I'll need some oak leaves, horsetail, and goldenrod to treat these, Twilightpaw thought faintly. *And definitely a lot of cobwebs.*

"She could be one of the rogues," A she-cat argued, snapping her out

of her thoughts. "We shouldn't help one of them after they killed so much of us."

"I know the smell of those rogues as soon as it touches my nose," The tom growled. "And this young cat doesn't have their stench."

"I guess you're right, Crag." The she-cat sighed. Her voice became gentler and closer to Twilightpaw's ear. "Are you alright? Do you think you'll be able to walk to the waterfall?"

Twilightpaw nodded slowly, and blinked away the cloudiness.

It seemed that she'd found the Tribe after all.

Chapter 69

"What's your name?" The she-cat who had spoken before asked. Her pelt was covered in mud, though Twilightpaw could see streaks of black fur that hadn't been smothered by the hardening mud.

"Twilightpaw." She struggled to sit up, and the tom, who had broad shoulders and amber eyes, helped her on her paws.

"A clan name," He murmured. His brown tabby pelt rippled in surprise. "What clan are you from?"

"ThunderClan." Twilightpaw licked at her wounds, wincing as her tongue felt raw, stinging flesh. Her head felt light, and she fought to stay conscious.

"Crag!" The she-cat gasped. "Look at her eyes!"

"Stoneteller's omen," The tom whispered. "She has eyes of tree and sky."

"You must come to the cave at once." The skinny black Tribe cat let Twilightpaw lean on her shoulders. "Come on.

"My name is Night of No Stars," She added. "And this is Crag Where Eagles Nest. We're not far from the waterfall. Just a bit farther up."

Twilightpaw blinked gratefully at Night, and limped after Crag. She could feel her paws stinging at the rough climb, and paused to lick them before setting off again.

"We're here." Crag glanced at Twilightpaw's heaving sides. Her wounds had started bleeding again, and Twilightpaw didn't know how long she'd be able to stay awake.

The eagle had injured her far worse than she'd expected a bird to, and the calico apprentice felt as if her hind leg was mauled by a fox.

"You won't be able to cross the waterfall like this," Night gestured at the heavy spray of white water. A pool was at the bottom, a few slippery stones that led to a cave. "We'll help."

Twilightpaw scrambled to the bottom, her blood washing into the pool as her paw slipped and splashed inside.

"Careful!" Crag grunted, and grabbed her scruff. Twilightpaw fell limp as he lifted her easily and jumped across. Night followed, and led her inside the cave as Crag set her down. Twilightpaw collapsed, her legs no longer holding her up anymore. Darkness swelled at the edge of her sight.

"You'll need to see Stoneteller for herbs," She sniffed at Twilightpaw's ragged flank. "Those look serious."

"Who is this?" She barely heard the rough growl. Twilightpaw tried lifting her head to see who had spoken, but a splitting pain hit her head like a sharp blow, and she fell unconscious, the world swirling before going black.

Chapter 70

"Wake up, you dormouse!" Twilightpaw blinked blearily, seeing the pale outline of Half Moon. "It's dawn, Twilight Sky! Furled Bracken said that I could hunt with you today."

Twilightpaw looked up, surprised by her littermate's overly bright tone. She could see false cheerfulness in the white she-cat's green eyes, clouding over grief and sorrow.

Twilightpaw remembered that it was only a couple of days since Leaf Patch had thrown herself off a tree. She shook out her pelt, trying to push away the grief.

"We're softpaws now," Half Moon continued. "So it won't be long until we become sharpclaws! Jay's Wing and Dove's Wing are training with Dark Whiskers. I wonder if we'll see them? They must be sad after...after Falcon Swoop died."

Another death? Twilightpaw wondered how many cats had died while she'd been traveling with Shade.

"Come on!" Half Moon swished out of the den and bounded out of the clearing. Twilightpaw followed, stretching her legs. She raced after her, quickly matching her pace.

"I hear a mouse," Half Moon whispered. "Try finding some other prey."

Twilightpaw left the pale she-cat stalking the mouse, then pricked her ears as she heard a loud screech. A hawk had flown out of nowhere, bursting through the trees, and glided after a fleeing rabbit.

A hawk in the lake territory? Twilightpaw watched as the huge bird crashed on top of the plump young rabbit. It spread its brown and gray-speckled wings as the rabbit let out a shrill squeak.

I could catch that hawk, She thought. I just need to get close enough to pounce, and I'll catch the rabbit and the hawk...

Twilightpaw sneaked closer, keeping low, and when she was close enough to see every feather on the rare bird's body, she leaped on top of the hawk, clawing at its wings.

The hawk let out a screech, shaking its wings and head to fling her off. It had killed the rabbit with a swift squeeze of its claws, but now it was the prey.

I've got it! Twilightpaw thought triumphantly. But the hawk suddenly grabbed the rabbit and rose clumsily into the air, a sharp cry echoing in her ears.

She bit the hawk behind its neck, her paws flailing to cling on. She tore out a mouthful of feathers, and she sank her fangs into hard flesh.

"Twilight Sky! What-" She saw Half Moon on the ground. "Be careful! Don't fa-"

The hawk let out a strangled squawk before falling to the ground with a thump. Twilightpaw collapsed onto its soft feathers, tasting blood in her mouth. She was glad she'd landed on feathers rather than the hard forest floor.

Chapter 71

Twilightpaw collapsed onto its soft feathers, tasting blood in her mouth. She was glad she'd landed on feathers rather than the hard forest floor.

Or stone... She shivered as she remembered the long fall that had made her so weak in the mountains.

"Twilight Sky! What were you thinking?" Half Moon snarled, stepping over brown-and-gray wings to reach her littermate. "You could have been killed!"

Twilightpaw licked the pale she-cat's head, feeling her tremble at the thought of losing another sister. She swept her tail elegantly around the fallen rabbit, which had not been as lucky as her; the fresh-kill was now a bloody mess of fur, though still intact.

"You might have caught that hawk, and earned a rabbit, but what if you'd died?" Half Moon looked down at the fresh-kill. Twilightpaw shrugged, pulling the hawk closer. She gathered the fallen feathers and picked them up along with the hawk. She placed the rabbit on one of its wings, and dragged her haul towards the camp.

"Are you not listening?" Half Moon stood in her way. Twilightpaw dropped her fresh-kill. "Don't risk your life again, alright? I don't want to lose another littermate! And I'm sure Rising Moon wouldn't like that, either."

Twilightpaw snorted at the thought of her mother being devastated over her death. She didn't even care about her remaining two kits.

Half Moon sighed, and picked up her mouse. "Let's just get back. There's enough to feed the leftovers to the elders."

Twilightpaw grabbed the hawk in her jaws again, and they set off towards camp, praying that she'd wake up soon.

The Tribe need me now, more than you do, Half Moon.

Chapter 72

"Great catch!" Chasing Clouds purred. His gray-and-white pelt brushed against Twilightpaw's. "Rising Moon! Look what Twilight Sky caught!"

Rising Moon emerged from the den. She blinked at the dead hawk and rabbit with no emotion in her eyes. Twilightpaw winced as she saw how weak and thin her mother looked.

"Nice mouse," Rising Moon nodded to Half Moon, and to Twilightpaw's surprise, the white-patched sharpclaw narrowed her eyes at the calico apprentice. "That hawk was caught with luck, if you ask me."

"Rising Moon!" Falcon Swoop, Jay's Wing and Dove's Wing's mother gasped, her eyes widened. "She is your kit! You can't treat her like that."

"You don't tell me how to treat my kits," Rising Moon snapped. "That...thing brings bad luck! The eyes were a sign that she is cursed!"

"Twilight Sky isn't cursed." Half Moon entwined her tail with her littermate's. "It was terrible that Leaf Patch and Gray Storm died, but it wasn't Twilight Sky's fault!"

"You won't convince me," Rising Moon whipped around. "If you want to have a curse hanging over your heads, let it be! I bet two rabbits that someone else will die in this moon!"

"Go get some rest." Furled Bracken murmured after the she-cat had stalked away. "You must be tired after the hunt. Don't forget to eat."

Twilightpaw nodded numbly, but dragged her paws towards her sleeping den. As she curled up in her nest, Twilightpaw wailed silently to Rock.

If my own mother hates me so much here, why am I here at all?

Twilightpaw woke up with a start. She was lying on a bed of soft feathers, and her wounds were aching.

"She's awake!" A cat noticed her open her eyes.

"Twilightpaw." A tom, who's brown pelt was speckled gray, rasped. Twilightpaw sat up, her tail curled neatly over her paws. She dipped her head in respect.

"I am the Teller of Pointed Stones," The old tom put one paw in front of him and dipped his head. "But you can call me Stoneteller, or Healer.

"Welcome to the Tribe of Rushing Water."

Chapter 73

Twilightpaw explored the cave, sniffing at every crack and stone she stumbled across. Many of the cats in the Tribe was watching her, some with eyes glowing with excitement and eagerness, some more suspicious. All the cats were muttering together casting her worshipping glances.

"Hi! I'm Pebble!" A young pale gray she-cat greeted her. Twilightpaw blinked, startled.

"Hello."

"Are your wounds still hurting?" Pebble asked, sniffing at the drying gouges in her flank. Twilightpaw winced as the she-cat touched the scratch.

"I can ask Stoneteller for herbs," The friendly cat offered. "You probably don't really know a lot about herbs. I heard from Stormfur that clan cats trained to fight and hunt."

Twilightpaw shook her head. "I'm training to be a medicine cat."

Pebble gasped. "You're going to be the Teller of Pointed Stones?"

Twilightpaw watched her, perplexed. "No. We train to help heal the wounded, offer advise to our leaders, and share tongues with StarClan."

"StarClan? What's StarClan?" She tilted her head.

"Our ancestors." Twilightpaw glanced up at the cave roof. Could StarClan still see her in this harsh, cold place? "They are the stars in the night sky. They watch over us and share with us knowledge."

"Kind of like the Tribe of Endless Hunting." Pebble noticed her confused expression. "Oh, I'd better explain everything. Stoneteller is our leader and healer; he leads us and heals our injuries. He also shares with our ancestors, the Tribe of Endless Hunting- kind of like

your StarClan."

"We've got prey-hunters and cave-guards, too," She added. "The prey-hunters catch us prey, and the cave guards keep eagles away from our cave. The kit-mothers take care of their kits, and the elders...well, they've earned their respect."

Twilightpaw nodded. "What's your job?"

"I'm a to-be," Pebble mewed proudly. "Training to be a cave-guard. See, I've got broader shoulders and stronger muscles than you. You'd be more of a prey-hunter with that kind of build. Kits who are big and strong will be cave-guards, and smaller, lither cats with strong hind legs will be prey-hunters. Hey, do clans also have prey-hunters and cave-guards? I mean, you guys don't live in caves."

Twilightpaw's whiskers twitched in amusement at the talkative to-be's questions. "We have four clans: WindClan, lithe and fast, RiverClan, who swim in water, ShadowClan, stealthy and strong, and ThunderClan, loyal and brave. We have warriors; cats who hunt and fight for their clan, and their apprentices, cats who are training to be warriors. Medicine cats..."

Twilightpaw spent the rest of the day with Pebble, sharing information but mostly listening to the gray she-cat's stories of the rogues that invaded and stole their prey. She shivered as she remembered the way Pebble's fur bristled, her eyes widened in fury and fright.

These fox-hearted rogues must be strong and ruthless for the to-be to be so frightened.

Chapter 74: Just something I want to say

I think I'll pause on this book for a bit because:

1.) I'm still working on Assassin in Pantala and the work of publishing 2 books at the same time is pretty exhausting.

2.) I ran out of ideas for this section of the book.

So I'll come back to this story after I finish my other story.

Bye!

Chapter 75

"It's time to eat now," Pebble called. "Come on! You can share with me."

Twilightpaw hurried after the pale gray to-be, and followed her to the fresh-kill pile. Pebble picked out a plump vole, and Twilightpaw took a small mouse for herself.

"You take a bite out of the mouse, I take a bite of the vole, and then we switch," Pebble mewed. Twilightpaw ripped a small chunk of meat from the mouse, and pushed it towards the gray she-cat. She then took a bite from the vole.

After they'd finished their meal, Twilightpaw followed Pebble to an area with shallow scoops in the stone ground, filled with soft downy feathers.

"You can sleep here," Pebble nodded to a small nest. "You'll need plenty of rest after such a long journey. And tomorrow Stoneteller will keep you pretty busy."

The calico apprentice nodded wearily, and curled up in the soft nest. *Not bad.*

She closed her eyes, and almost immediately fell to sleep.

"You're here at last." Twilightpaw turned to see a scarred dark gray tom behind her, staring at her with piercing amber eyes. She could see endless bare stone peaks, but her nose twitched as she smelled prey.

This must be the Tribe of Rushing Water, Twilightpaw guessed.

"I am Jagged Peak where Heron Sits," He continued. "The tribe will need you to stay for a while."

Twilightpaw blinked. She knew that she'd been called to the

mountains, but the calico apprentice had only gone to find out more about her past.

Or what the prophecy means, She thought. *Why's Jaypaw in the ancient times, but not Lionpaw or Hollypaw?*

"Ah, the prophecy." A new cat bounded over, her pelt so faint Twilightpaw could see right through her. She stiffened as she recognized the dark pelt. *Dark Whiskers?*

"Hello, Twilight Sky," Dark Whiskers purred. "I know you have come for answers of the Three, but this is not the time to think about your littermates.

"A time of blood and death has greeted the Tribe, and a cat with the eyes of forest and sky will come to light the path of help."

Chapter 76

"Come on, Twilightpaw." Twilightpaw opened her eyes sleepily to find Talon, the huge dark brown tom who'd rescued her from the eagle, looking down at her. "Stoneteller is waiting for you."

She stood up and shook out her pelt, feathers fluttering down to the stone floor. Twilightpaw followed Talon to the entrance of a smaller cave. He dipped his head before nodding at her to get in. The calico she-cat quietly padded through the entrance to find an old, skinny dark brown tabby sitting silently by a small pool, his eyes rested on her.

"Twilightpaw." He rasped. Twilightpaw dipped her head respectfully, her odd eyes never leaving Stoneteller's own amber ones. "I am guessing you came because you have heard of our prophecy?"

She shook her head. "I came for answers of the past."

"Very well." Stoneteller sighed wearily. "I am afraid you will not find any answers right now. You will find answers later on in the future, maybe."

Twilightpaw lifted her gaze to look at a spiderweb at the top corner of the cave. A small spider was spinning cobweb into the irregular patterns.

"Answers are a strange thing," She ventured carefully. "They could lead to things we can simply not expect. They can come earlier or later than we expect."

"True. Very true," Stoneteller agreed. "But I have gotten a warning from the Tribe of Endless Hunting. How the Tribe is on the way to death and blood, and a cat with eyes of forest and sky will light a path of hope. You are the one."

Twilightpaw stiffened. So Stoneteller had received the same

prophecy. "I don't light paths of hope."

"But now you will," He pressed. "You will help us endure the rogues who have killed many of us."

Twilightpaw wondered how he was so sure that it was the true meaning of the prophecy. "Perhaps it is someone else," She suggested.

"No, the Tribe of Endless Hunting was talking about you," Stoneteller insisted. "I have interpreted their words for countless of moons. You will stay with us until the invaders have gone. You may go now."

Twilightpaw shrugged helplessly. The old Healer was forcing her to stay.

Would she ever be able to protect the Three from whatever threat that was coming closer and closer?

Chapter 77

It had been a half moon of being stuck inside the cave behind the waterfall. Twilightpaw had kept her memory for medicine fresh, and Stoneteller had taught her a little bit about interpreting signs and herbs in the mountains. Night and Talon had disappeared a few sunrises before, and no one had been able to track them.

Pebble, Screech, and all the other to-bes had been nice to her, sharing fresh-kill and telling her stories of Sharpclaw, the giant mountain cat that had terrorized them for so long.

"So Crag scratched Sharptooth right on the nose, and he fled to his secret den in the mountains," Swoop told Twilightpaw excitedly. "We didn't see that ugly brute for a few days, until he came back and killed Cloud with Storm in Belly." Her head dropped in grief. "She was a great elder, telling us stories when we were kits."

"But then the clan cats came-" Pebble was interrupted abruptly as Stoneteller padded towards them, his eyes weary and clouded with doubt.

"Twilightpaw," He rasped. "Come with me." The brown tabby Healer flicked his tail, gesturing for her to follow him. Twilightpaw stood up, washing her paws quickly, before walking after him.

"The Tribe of Endless Hunting have come to me," Stoneteller explained once they were in the Cave of Pointed Stones. "They have told me that I should not make the same mistake, and keep a clan cat imprisoned in the mountains again. They told me that help was coming, and there was no need for you to stay anymore."

Twilightpaw's pelt tingled with anticipation; would she finally be able to leave the cave?"

"But the Tribe of Endless Hunting have not helped us when Sharptooth had come to kill my cats one by one, and now they are letting rogues hunt and steal our prey on our land." His voice

deepened to a rumbling growl. "They have not guided us through dangerous times, and their prophecies are *useless!"*

"No," Twilightpaw interrupted boldly. "Prophecies guide the Tribe and clans through hard times. You are lucky you have not lost more cats to Sharptooth and the rogues."

"We have to endure harsh weather, and there is barely enough food to feed our kits!" Stoneteller hissed, his tail lashing warningly. "The Tribe of Endless Hunting is useless! Do you hear me? *Useless!"*

Twilightpaw leaped back as Stoneteller slashed his paw at her face. She felt the tips of his claws graze her nose. Twilightpaw touched it gingerly, relieved when she didn't feel blood.

"Get out of my sight!" He roared. "You will never leave this cave! Ever!"

Chapter 78

Twilightpaw raced out of the cave, her heart pounding. *Stoneteller defied the Tribe of Endless Hunting! He can't do that!*

She skidded to a halt just as she was about to bump into Crag.

"Woah!" He purred. "Hi, Twilightpaw! Are you okay?"

She nodded shakily, and slowed down her pace. The calico she-cat stopped besides her nest, and curled up inside the soft bundle of feathers. She wrapped her tail over her nose, and curled into a tight ball.

Will I ever get to fulfill the prophecy of the Three?

"Hey! Twilight Sky! Are you a cat or a doormouse? Help me fix up the den roof; it's leaking again!" Twilightpaw blinked open her blue and green eyes wearily, finding Dove's Wing looking down at her with her large blue eyes. The gray she-cat's mouth was filled with dead leaves and honeysuckle, her paws paused midway through patching up a large hole in the roof.

"So? Jay's Wing is fetching moss for Fin Leap. Remember?" Dove's Wing added, her eyes bright with excitement. "He's joining the softpaw den. We don't want him to think that our den is as broken up as a dead tree!"

Twilightpaw shook out her fur and took half of the honeysuckle and reared up, weaving it awkwardly into the gap. She sneezed as a drop of water landed on her nose.

"Did someone catch a cold here?" A gray tabby tom with bright blue eyes pushed his way into the den. His jaws were full of soft dry moss.

"No, Jay's Wing," Dove's Wing purred. "Twilight Sky's having trouble fixing up the den roof."

"Oh. Well, I'll set up Fin Leap's nest next to mine, if you don't mind." Jay's Wing set down the moss and molded it into a nest with skillful paws. "Do you know where your sister is, Twilight Sky?"

Twilightpaw shrugged, stuffing pawfuls of dead leaves into a small hole.

"She wouldn't know, she's spent the entire morning sleeping through a leak in the den!" Dove's Wing mewed cheekily. "I think your crush went hunting for mice."

"She's not my crush!" Jay's Wing retorted, his fur bushed up in embarrassment.

"It's obvious to everyone that you're head over tails for her," Dove's Wing shoved her brother good-naturedly. "There'll be more kits soon!"

"We're only softpaws!" Twilightpaw licked her paws clean and headed outside, an amused purr rumbling softly in her throat. She heard Jay's Wing's voice yowl, "Besides, it's not like *you* never become a stammering mouse-brain whenever Fallen Leaves speaks to you!"

Chapter 79

Twilightpaw woke up, yawning, in her feathery nest. The day with the Ancients hadn't been very eventful, but it still had taken some of the weight of Stoneteller's words off her shoulders.

Something flashed in the corner of her eyes. She spun around to find a familiar, though flickering, tortoiseshell she-cat.

"Spottedleaf," Twilightpaw breathed. Pebble, Screech, and Swoop were still sound asleep in their nests, as well as the prey-hunters, cave-guards, elders, kits, and their mothers.

"You don't have much time," Spottedleaf whispered. "Follow me. You need to escape from this cave."

"But- Stoneteller-"

"He's asleep, young one." Spottedleaf flicked her dappled tail. "Everyone's asleep. You must go."

Twilightpaw looked back at the unmoving shape of Pebble. Was it fair to leave her friend in danger of starvation and death from the rogues?

"The Tribe will be fine," Spottedleaf hissed. "Quick, I can only stay so far away from the clans for so long. We need to get going." The beautiful tortoiseshell bounded off towards the entrance, her fur glittering with stars. She was growing paler as time passed.

Twilightpaw ran silently after the StarClan cat, and she leaped from stone to stone, passing through the gap at the edge of the waterfall. Her ears rang with its continuous roar.

After they had traveled a distance from the cave, Spottedleaf turned to Twilightpaw.

"Cats from all four clans are coming to help the Tribe of Rushing Water," She mewed. "You don't need to worry. You are needed in

ThunderClan. Go back to your home."

Before Twilightpaw could say anything, Spottedleaf disappeared, leaving only her sweet scent behind.

I'm finally free from the Tribes...and help is coming for them!

Chapter 80

Twilightpaw quickened her pace as she padded down the mountain. She hadn't taken a single break as she continued through the harsh environment, careful not to be seen by eagles or hawks. The sun was already starting to rise, and it wouldn't be long before a Tribe cat would notice she had gone.

That's the Twolegplace! She thought, glancing at the faraway red dens. *I wonder if Shade is waiting for me...*

Twilightpaw felt her paws quicken to a run, and she raced down the deep slope.

Almost out of the mountains-!

She skidded to a halt as she spotted a gaping hole in the middle of her path. It was easily as long as three tail-lengths, and Twilightpaw saw nothing but darkness as she peered down the gap.

Guess I'll have to jump, She thought. The medicine cat apprentice walked a little bit backwards, and sprinted towards the hole.

One stumble and I'm crow-food!

Twilightpaw ran towards the gap, and when she was no more than a mouse-length from the gaping mouth of blackness, she stretched her legs as far as they could go and leaped.

Twilightpaw landed neatly on the other side, having almost a tail-length to spare. She twitched her ear in delight; it was lucky that she had long legs and a light build.

As the sun rose high into the sky, Twilightpaw felt her paws tingle with excitement as she could make out the details of each den in the Twolegplace.

Her heart leaped as she spotted a familiar cat whose white pelt was spotted with black, his dark tail swishing. He paused as he noticed

the calico she-cat make her way down the mountain.

Twilightpaw ran down the path, a purr filling her throat.

Shade!

Chapter 81

"I've waited for a half-moon for you to come back!" Shade exclaimed. He and Twilightpaw had walked into the Twolegplace, on their way to find Purdy. "Every day, every sunrise, until the sun starts to set."

"You didn't get hungry?" Twilightpaw asked.

"I catch a mouse or two before I come. I saved it until I got hungry and then I ate it." Shade's stomach grumbled on cue. "I could eat crow-food right now!"

"We're close to the forest. We can hunt." Twilightpaw parted her jaws to taste the air. She smelled a thrush nearby. Shade slinked into the trees, his dark tail swishing after him. Twilightpaw bounded after him, her whiskers twitching as she smelled the thrush scent growing stronger. She dropped to a crouch as she spotted the small, plump bird.

Shade noticed the thrush as well, and he padded away silently, leaving her with her prey.

Twilightpaw slid closer to the thrush, watching it grab a beetle from the ground. She was almost a tail-length away from it now. Twilightpaw tensed, and prepared to pounce.

"It's been so long since we saw you, Purdy!" A loud purr made the thrush let out a shrill cry and fly off into the air. Desperate, Twilightpaw leaped up and slammed her paws down on the thrush. She felt soft feathers tickle her nose, and the thrush fluttered back up to safety.

Whoever that was is going to regret scaring away the thrush! She thought crossly.

Shade pushed his way towards her, his jaws empty.

"I was tracking a huge rabbit, but that yowl scared it away!" He growled. "It must've scared away every bird in the forest!" Shade marched towards where the voice had sounded, his tail lashing irritably.

Twilightpaw followed his lead, slightly worried about the other cat. She stopped as she saw Purdy surrounded by cats with a familiar scent. Her eyes caught four young cats that were her age. Three toms, one she-cat. She almost let out a cry of relief.

The clan cats are here!

Chapter 82

"Twilightpaw!" Hollypaw was the first one to rush forward, purring.

"We all thought you were dead!" Lionpaw added. "But you're here!"

"I told you she was alive." Jaypaw's tail lashed with annoyance, though his blind blue gaze was filled with relief. "But of course no one listened to me."

"Twilightpaw!" Squirrelflight purred. "Don't you ever run away again! You've scared me and the entire clan to death!"

"Who's this?" Brambleclaw pushed forward towards Shade, growling.

"I'm Shade." The young tom dipped his head respectfully. "I traveled with Twilightpaw until she went up the mountains, and I'm going to travel to the lake with her."

"You went to the mountains?" Lionpaw blurted. "We're going to go and rescue the Tribe cats!"

I don't think they want help, Twilightpaw thought silently. She remembered Pebble's terrified eyes as she recalled the fight with rogues. *At least, some of them don't.*

Talon and Night gaped at her with wide eyes. "Twilightpaw? What are you doing here?"

"Escaped." Twilightpaw glanced at the rest of the group, which hung at the back. Stormfur and Brook had stepped back for her to greet her parents and littermates. Tawnypelt, the tortoiseshell ShadowClan queen, stood with two WindClan cats; Crowfeather and Breezepaw. She dipped her head in a polite greeting.

"Escape?" Squirrelflight's eyebrows were furrowed in confusion. "But the Tribe wouldn't keep you prisoner! They were kind enough to

give us a place to rest on the way to the lake, during the Great Journey..."

"I seem to remember that they also held a certain RiverClan warrior hostage because of their stupid little 'prophecy'!" Crowfeather growled. Stormfur blinked at him, but didn't say anything. Twilightpaw tilted his head, slightly curious about the WindClan tom's anger.

"We'll be heading towards the mountains soon." Brambleclaw broke the awkward silence. "Let's hunt and rest for a bit, and we can carry on. Twilightpaw, do you want to come with us?"

Twilightpaw shook her head, remembering Stoneteller's crazed glare as he forbade her to leave the cave. Shade pressed against her, his warm fur making her relax. Hollypaw looked at her with wide eyes.

"At least stay and eat with us?" She pleaded. "We missed you a lot. Leafpool's worried about you."

Twilightpaw hesitated, glancing at Shade. She didn't want to make him feel uncomfortable.

"Don't worry. I'll just hang around in the forest until you finish mingling with your friends," He meowed. "Really. Don't worry about me."

Twilightpaw could see that he didn't really want to be alone. And the wind was tugging at her paws, urging her to go back to the lake.

Home.

"See you soon," She mewed, turning away from the group.

Chapter 83

Twilightpaw could see the lake. Towering oak trees of ThunderClan.

Home.

Twilightpaw's ears twitched, and her paws moved quickly. Shade hurried to catch up to her.

She finally stopped at the edge of WindClan territory, and Shade slowed down.

"You cannot trespass onto clan territory," Twilightpaw explained to Shade. "It is time for you to leave."

Shade looked into her eyes, his blue gaze clouded with pain. "I...I can't leave you. What if I join ThunderClan? I can be happy, and I can be with you."

Twilightpaw's heart ached with longing, to be with this kind rogue, but she knew that could never happen. "I'm sorry. You cannot come. And if you do, you'll never be with me. I am a medicine cat, and medicine cats can never have a mate or kits."

A flash of strange emotion passed Shade's eyes, but it disappeared. "I understand," He murmured. "Maybe I'll see you again."

"I'll miss you," Twilightpaw breathed, pressing close to Shade's flank. "May StarClan light your path."

"And yours, too." Shade turned away, and with a final, defeated glance, he raced away to the horseplace.

Twilightpaw stared after his disappearing silhouette until his pale fur was no more than a dot in the distance, and she turned away, sighing. She stepped onto the WindClan scent marker, and placed her paws into the territory.

ThunderClan, here I come.

Chapter 84

Twilightpaw padded through the familiar trees of ThunderClan territory. The sun wasn't up yet, so she didn't run into any patrols.

I have a lot of explaining to do, She thought. *But I can think about that later.*

All she wanted to do was see familiar faces.

Twilightpaw stiffened as she heard a shriek of pain.

Daisy! What is going on?

She quickened her pace into a run, and she sped past the blurs of the undergrowth. Twilightpaw didn't stop as she slipped through the entrance of the thorn barrier. She sped past Berrynose and Honeypaw.

"What-?" Honeypaw meowed, startled.

Twilightpaw pricked her ears as Daisy let out another yowl.

The nursery!

She burst into the den. Ferncloud looked up from Daisy's side, but the gentle cream queen was in too much pain to notice.

"Twilightpaw!" Ferncloud gasped. "You're back!"

Twilightpaw crouched besides Daisy, suddenly nervous. She'd never experienced a kitting before. How would she know what to do?

"Leafpool," Twilightpaw mewed.

"She's gone herb gathering," Ferncloud explained hurriedly. "Graystripe has gone to fetch her."

Twilightpaw nodded. She racked her brain for memories of

Ferncloud's kitting. What had Leafpool used then?

She couldn't remember anything.

Wait a moment- I was part of Rising Moon's kitting!

Leaves with a tangy scent...Raspberry leaves! She was pretty sure there were a few chervil leaves and ragwort as well.

Twilightpaw rushed to the medicine den. She grabbed a few raspberry leaves, chervil, and ragwort in her jaws. She was back in a moment. The apprentice chewed up the chervil and ragwort, squeezing the juice into Daisy's parted mouth. Daisy swallowed, wincing at the bitter taste. Twilightpaw gave her a few raspberry leaves.

Daisy let out a howl, and her belly rippled as another wave possessed her body. Twilightpaw saw a wet bundle tumbling onto the blood-stained nest. Twilightpaw nipped open the fragile sac and began to rasp her tongue over the kit's fur. The kit let out a mewl, squirming. Twilightpaw set him down at Daisy's belly.

"Twilightpaw?" The calico she-cat turned around to see Leafpool standing at the entrance of the nursery. After a moment, the brown tabby shook herself and settled down besides Daisy.

"You have one more kit to go," Leafpool announced. "Push when I tell you to- Push!"

With an ear-splitting yowl, Daisy tensed, and Twilightpaw picked up the last kit. She licked her dry, and the kit let out a wail.

"One tom-kit and a little she-kit," Leafpool purred. "Congratulations, Daisy."

Twilightpaw and Leafpool watched as the queen cleaned both of her kits with her tongue. After a while, Leafpool turned to Twilightpaw, her amber gaze filled with warmth.

"I'm glad you're back," The medicine cat mewed. "You have quite a lot of explaining to do."

Chapter 85

Twilightpaw rose from her nest, yawning. She'd snatched a few hours of sleep before dawn came, and she felt fresher than ever.

I'm glad I'm back.

"Twilightpaw!" Leafpool called. "Firestar wants to see you."

Twilightpaw stretched, and gave herself a quick wash before slipping out of the den.

Surprised looks and whispers immediately greeted her as soon as she was outside.

"Twilightpaw!" Cinderpaw yelped. "You're back!"

"We thought you were dead!"

Twilightpaw glanced at Highledge, where Firestar was beckoning her to come. She slipped past the crowd of cats and leaped up to stand besides the powerful leader.

"Everyone should return to their duties now!" Graystripe yowled. "Mousewhisker, Berrynose, I thought I put you on a patrol?"

Twilightpaw twitched her tail, slightly amused as Berrynose and Mousewhisker ducked their heads in embarrassment, scampering after a purring Sandstorm.

"Come in," Firestar suggested, heading into his den. "I'd like an explanation of where you went."

Twilightpaw explained her journey to the mountains, how Stoneteller had imprisoned her in the cave, and the journey back, where she met Brambleclaw and his group. She left out Shade, however, because she didn't think Firestar would be very pleased to hear about their relationship.

"Stoneteller wasn't this cranky on the Great Journey," Firestar murmured after she finished. "He must be very worried about his tribe."

Twilightpaw shrugged; She wasn't feeling very sympathetic for the old cat who had forced her to stay inside a damp cave with little fresh-kill.

Firestar seemed lost in thought, and after a long moment he dipped his head to her and meowed, "You may go now."

Twilightpaw nodded and headed out of the den. She jumped down the Highledge, and made her way to the medicine den.

"Twilightpaw! Can you treat Birchfall's paw? He stepped on a thorn," Leafpool called. Twilightpaw nodded and went inside the den. Birchfall was waiting for her, holding up one front paw.

"It hurts!" Birchfall complained. Twilightpaw inspected the thorn for a moment, and grasped it in between her teeth, yanking it out. Birchfall let out a yelp of pain, licking his pad frantically.

It's good to see everything returning to normal.